THE DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES OF THE SPANISH EASTERN DISTRICT

OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD:

ENHANCING THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF NEW CONVERTS

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis project was to study how the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God, which is a Pentecostal denomination, is providing for the spiritual development of new converts. The Spanish Eastern District is the largest Hispanic district of the fourteen Spanish-language districts of our denomination, with approximately 478 churches in sixteen states on the east coast of North America. The data compiled in this research is significant because it brings clarity to how our congregants are being developed spiritually and is most likely indicative of the discipleship practices in the churches of the other thirteen Spanish Districts. This claim is based on the uniformity and consistency of Hispanic culture that is intertwined in our ecclesiology.

In order to study the discipleship practices in our district, a survey was conducted of seventy-two churches during the annual Pastors' and Leaders' Summit in October 2016; the results indicated several strengths and weaknesses within our present discipleship system that are addressed in the project.

After compiling and analyzing the data, the researcher presented three different discipleship programs that responded to the weaknesses revealed by the study; any one of these programs can be implemented to strengthen our churches. The third discipleship system includes the basic principles and structure of a program that the researcher will begin to develop after he has successfully accomplished all the prerequisites required in order to complete the Doctor of Ministry program.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND SETTING

The Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God

In this thesis-project I will study the past and present discipleship practices of

Hispanic Pentecostals in the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. It is my

experience, based on twenty-five years of service within the Spanish Eastern District, that

far too many believers are biblically illiterate and do not have a clear understanding of

the gospel message or of Christian orthodoxy. This present reality affects both the

church's proclamation of the gospel and its ecclesial call. I contend that one of the

contributing factors to our present condition is the absence of a systematic discipleship

curriculum that assimilates new converts to comprehend and embrace what Christians

have believed for centuries that will subsequently equip them to propagate the message of

the gospel to those within our community.

In a discipleship seminar I conducted in Queens, New York, in October 2014

before approximately forty credentialed[1] Assemblies of God ministers, I discovered the

following: Thirty-one percent surveyed did not get any type of follow-up from the

church, nor did they receive any direct or personal mentorship after their conversion to

Christ. Forty-six percent reported that the present discipleship process in their own local

church needed to be contextualized, upgraded, and/or revitalized. Thirty-eight percent did

not have a structured discipleship program for new converts in their church. Sixty-nine

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1. A credentialed minister in the Assemblies of God holds one of three ministerial ranks: certified minister, licensed minister, or ordained minister. See the constitution and bylaws of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God, article VII – Members.

percent of the clergy in the section[2] of Queens do not have a mentor they can open up to, and thirty-eight percent are not personally mentoring anyone. These statistics provide a window into a discipleship omission that has gone on for far too long.

In this project, I will continue to compile data targeting the discipleship practices of the churches I supervise in northern New Jersey, which is the largest section within the Spanish Eastern District. I will accomplish this by creating questionnaires that will be designed to gather data on the past and present discipleship practices of our churches and follow up on the information obtained by interviewing pastor/leaders in churches where the data reveal information vital to developing a discipleship system that responds to the needs. This will provide a panoramic view of the current practices and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of our methodologies in order to pinpoint some of the deficiencies and strengths in our present systems. The goal is to have at least twenty-five percent of the churches implement a newly developed discipleship program that responds to the deficiencies revealed in the study. This has the potential to turn the tide of biblical illiteracy in our churches, furthering healthy spiritual formation and thus igniting the spirit of evangelism, volunteerism, and a passion for knowing, understanding, and rightly dividing Holy Scripture in our organization.

Who Are These Pentecostals?

In order to understand the ecclesial culture of the churches in the Spanish Eastern District, let me first provide a brief overview of the Pentecostal movement, which our denomination has been a part of for approximately eighty years. The Pentecostal

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2. The Spanish Eastern District is organized into six regional zones and seventeen sections within those zones. Queens is one of the sections in zone two. See the constitution and bylaws of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God, article X – Organization.

movement has gathered significant attention in the church in the past decades, perhaps

because of the extraordinary growth this segment of Christendom has enjoyed in the past

one hundred years. Theologian Timothy C. Tennent reveals in his work on World

Christianity that the Pentecostal movement has grown from "a few scattered revival

meetings to a major global force of a half a billion adherents, second in size only to

Roman Catholicism."[3] Eldin Villafañe reports that one out of every five Christians in the

world today is Pentecostal and that the movement gains nineteen million new members

each year contributing over thirty-four billion dollars to Christian causes every year.[4]

With a numerical growth this staggering, Pentecostals were destined to get the attention

of the ecclesiastical elite eventually. In light of such rapid growth, several questions

emerge, such as, who are these Pentecostals? Where did this movement come from? And

how did they grow so fast?

Some scholars define Pentecostals as "Christians who emphasize the power and

presence of the Holy Spirit" in their ecclesiastical praxis; they believe that the gifts of the

Holy Spirit are available for Christians today and should equip the church to "proclaim

that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father."[5] These Christians believe that the book

of Acts provides a "model for the contemporary church" and on that basis "every

believer" can experience a "baptism in the Spirit" which is understood by them to be an

"empowering for mission, distinct from regeneration, which is marked by speaking in

tongues."[6] They also believe that the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:8-10) are available for the

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3. Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 164.

4. Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 84.

5. Eldin Villafañe, *Introdución al Pentecostalismo* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2012), 20.

6. Robert P. Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 13.

church today and therefore exercise them as the Holy Spirit leads, in the context of the local assembly.[7] When endeavoring to answer the question of the movement's origins, it would be wise to consider the four modern "pre-Pentecostal" movements presented by Allen Anderson that predate the famous outpouring on Azusa Street. The first is the holiness movement, which was a "reaction to liberalism and formalism in established Protestant churches."[8] These believers interpreted the Bible literally, preached the need of a "personal and individual experience of conversion," and believed in the "moral perfection" of all true believers.[9] The next significant Pentecostal movement that predates the Azusa Street outpouring was the Keswick revivals, which started in 1875. These revivals were profoundly influenced by revivalists such as Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, and Dwight L. Moody, and laid the "groundwork for the birth of Pentecostalism."[10] Another important Pentecostal movement Anderson points to is the Welsh revival of 1904. This revival claimed to have had approximately "32,000 converts throughout Wales" who experienced worship services that lasted for hours, and "spontaneous and seemly chaotic" emotional outbursts with "singing in the Spirit"[11] were reported. The final pre-Azusa Street movement communicated here happened in Mumbai, India, in a "Mukti mission for young widows and orphans."[12] This revival, unlike the others, was led by a woman, Pandita Ramabai; it began in 1905 and lasted for two years.[13] During this revival, a young woman was "reported to have been baptized in the

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7. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 13.
8. Allen Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 27.
9. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 28.
10. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 28-29.
11. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 36.
12. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 37.
13. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 37.

Spirit and to manifest various ecstatic phenomena, including speaking in tongues."[14] This global ecclesiastical phenomenon was the antithesis of the modern Pentecostal movement. One could argue that since these spiritual outpourings were happening in different parts of the world and were independent of each other, our sovereign Lord was preparing the inhabitants of the earth for a divine visitation of the Holy Spirit that would change the church at its core. This is evident in the fact that these expressions were not common ecclesiastical practices of that age, yet they are similar to how the modern Pentecostals practice their faith today. Having considered the historical sparks that preceded the spiritual bonfire of the Pentecostal movement, let us turn our attention to Azusa Street and move forward toward understanding the theological perspectives of Pentecostals in the twenty-first century.

Some Pentecostal scholars point to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California, in 1906 as the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement.[15] This revival was led by William Joseph Seymour, a one-eyed, poverty-stricken black man from the Holiness movement.[16] Seymour moved to California from Texas after receiving an invitation to become the pastor of a small Holiness church on Santa Fe Street, but after preaching his first sermon based on the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he was not allowed to return to that pulpit.[17] Having no resources at his disposal, Seymour was invited to stay with Richard Asbury, who had a house located at 214 Bonnie Brae Street; Seymour continued to preach the message of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in

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14. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 37.
15. Vinson Synan, Donald Dayton, Eldin Villafañe, and Gaston Espinosa, to name a few.
16. Vinson Synon, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 93.
17. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 95-96.

Asbury's living room.[18] Eventually, the prayer services outgrew the Bonnie Brae Street location, and Seymour was able to move the revival to an old abandoned building at 312 Azusa Street. The rest is history.[19] As soon as he began to preach in his new location, a "monumental revival began and scores of people started to 'fall under the power' and arise again speaking in tongues."[20] Throughout the three-year history of the Azusa Street revival, thousands of people flocked to the mission every day with seekers coming to Los Angeles by the trainful, not only from all around North America but from other continents as well.[21] Within this three-year period, Seymour sent missionaries from Azusa Street to preach this full gospel message of the Spirit all over the world. The sparks of Pentecostal revival that started in different parts of the United States, India, and Wales had been set ablaze in the City of Angels and were spreading unto the ends of the earth.[22]

In light of these historical facts concerning Pentecostalism, let us now consider some of the key factors that contributed to the rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement. The first characteristic has nothing to do with any obvious theological or spiritual facet of the movement; I am referring to the aspect of publicity. As a matter of fact, one could make the point that the publicity that the revival received from the newspapers was somewhat consequential (although one could argue that the sovereignty of God was at work in it all, including the publicity). On April 18, the year the revival began, the *Los Angeles Times*, perhaps in an attempt to ridicule and mock the revival, published on the

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18. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 96.
19. Villafañe, *Introdución al Pentecostalismo*, 28.
20. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 97-98.
21. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 98.
22. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 98-100.

front page "Weird Babel of Tongues."[23] The story line continued as the reporter

described the revival experience as best he could: "the night is made hideous by the

howling of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying back and forth in a nervous

racking attitude of prayer and supplication. Breathing strange utterances and mouthing a

creed which it would seem no sane mortal could understand, the newest religious sect has

started in Los Angeles."[24] This reporter probably never realized the impact his story

would eventually make on the movement, because before long, thousands of people

throughout the world would make their way to be a part of those so-called weird

babblings and strange utterances. I indicated above that I believe this Pentecostal

movement was an intentional part of the sovereign plan of almighty God and that the

unintentional role of the press was, in effect, evidence of the fact. I make this statement

because this history, and in particular the role that publicity played, reminds me of

something similar that happened in church history some three centuries earlier that was

perhaps of equal consequence to the kingdom of God. I am referring to the translation,

subsequent printing, and distribution of Martin Luther's ninety-five theses in 1517.

According to the acclaimed church historian Justo Gonzalez, Luther wrote the theses in

Latin and not in the common language of the Germans because his intention was to

engage in a "scholarly dispute with intellectuals," and he hoped to prove to them that his

theses was correct.[25] Gonzalez goes on to argue that Luther did not realize when he

posted his theses that they would be "translated into German, printed, and widely

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23. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 24.

24. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 1.

25. Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1975), 36.

distributed throughout the country."[26] This obvious act of divine sovereignty resulted in

Luther being eventually excommunicated from the Catholic Church and becoming the

father of the Reformation. Just as in the case of the Azusa Street revival, the aspect of

publication spread the news of a movement that would change Christianity—a most

unlikely, nontheological, and nonspiritual act of almighty God. Some of my friends from

the Reformed tradition may be shocked and even consider it blasphemous that I would

compare the impact of Luther's ninety-five theses with what happened in the early years

of the Pentecostal movement, but the fact remains that the role of publicity in both cases

was the catalyst to their prospective movements.

Another significant contribution to the growth of Pentecostalism was its emphasis

on the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals from the beginning of the

movement have believed that the experience and ministry of the Holy Spirit, recorded in

the book of Acts, serve as a model for faith and practice today.[27] Pentecostals believe that

the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a "post-conversion" experience that is available to all

believers which will empower them to preach the gospel boldly, thus enabling them to

fulfil the mission of Christ.[28] Tennent argues that the Reformers neglected the doctrine of

the Holy Spirit because dogmas such as "the authority of scripture, ecclesiology and

Christology" were the pressing issues of the day that needed to be addressed and

prioritized.[29] He explains that over time "several major theological traditions developed

that either denied completely or extremely limited the active role of the Holy Spirit in

performing miracles, divine healing, demonic deliverance, prophecy, tongue speaking,

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26. González, *History of Christian Thought*, 36.
27. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 10.
28. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 10.
29. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 171.

and other elements that later became central features of the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit."[30] It would appear that even though the Reformers did not consider pneumatology a priority for ecclesial praxis (unless the doctrine of the Trinity was at risk) our Lord disagreed and poured out his Spirit afresh in the beginning of the twentieth century that has taken the church by storm. One point that legitimizes the pneumatological perspective of Pentecostals is the fact that in the beginning of the revival Seymour did not experience speaking in other tongues.[31] This is substantial because even though he had not experienced it for himself, he believed that this doctrine was biblical having received it from his teacher Charles Fox Parham in Texas.[32] Convinced that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was for more than regeneration and sanctification, Seymour preached the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to all who would receive his message, and as a result, prisoners were set free, the blind were made to see, those oppressed received deliverance, and the gospel was proclaimed to the poor.[33]

This brings me to the final aspect that contributed to the rapid growth of Pentecostals relevant to our discussion; it is what Villafañe calls "the spirit of the oppressed."[34] This phrase best reflects the description of the people group that was the most sincerely interested and attracted to the Pentecostal message. They were those who society had marginalized; they were the poor; they were those who had no access to the ivory halls of education; they were the oppressed. Consider this: William Seymour, the catalyst of the revival, was the son of an ex-slave and was poor.[35] Therefore, people were

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30. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 171.
31. Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 94.
32. Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 94.
33. Paraphrase from Luke 4:18, New International Version.
34. Villafañe, *Liberating Spirit*, 87.
35. Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 93.

not listening to him in an effort to associate themselves with the elite. The building at

Azusa Street was "in shambles."[36] People were not going there to be affiliated with the

socially high class. People came because they connected with the movement. They

acknowledged the miseries of life and the message of hope Seymour's gospel provided.

Menzies agrees that Pentecostals "identify with the stories in Acts of the 'peasants

persevering' in the midst of great suffering because so many face similar challenges."[37]

This phenomenon did not belong exclusively to the City of Angels but repeated itself

throughout the world and especially in third-world countries, where Pentecostalism

became the "healer of the pathos of poverty."[38] Countries where illiteracy is common

were attracted to the simplicity and opportunity that the movement provided. Menzies

once again provides helpful insight, stating that the "simplicity of reading the text as a

model for our lives, without angst about the miraculous or how it all fits into complex

theological systems, clearly enables the message to be readily grasped by people in pre-

or semi-literate cultures, people that function in more experiential and less cognitive

cultures."[39] "We should not forget that these people represent the majority of the

inhabitants of our planet."[40] This may be why Pentecostals traditionally have been

unfamiliar with the systematic theological arguments of the scholars in the west, and why

historically the movement did not promote the need for advanced theological training

with the same urgency of other ecclesial circles.[41] In many Pentecostal churches around

the world, prerequisites for church leadership, including the clergy, extends only as far as

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36. Synon, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 97.
37. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 21.
38. Villafañe, *Introducción al pentecostalismo*, 98-99.
39. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 23-24.
40. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 23-24.
41. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 173.

a local, unaccredited Bible institute, and in some cases, even that is not required. Nevertheless, the life-changing, life-affirming access that Pentecostalism offers its adherents has produced "the most effective evangelists"[42] and the "most successful social movement"[43] in the history of the church.

Hispanic Pentecostals

Now that I have given a brief overview of the Pentecostal movement in general, let us turn our attention to how the movement has developed among Hispanics and thereby present a clearer understanding of our particular denominational setting. Hispanics have been a part of the Azusa Street revival from the beginning. According to the recent work of Gastón Espinosa, two of the founding figures who trace their Pentecostal roots to the revival were Abundio and Rosa López.[44] This couple heard Seymour's message and witnessed the power of the Spirit firsthand, testifying to how the Holy Spirit moved in the meetings to produce forgiveness, sanctification, and the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit.[45] This couple, along with other Hispanic leaders such as Francisco Olazábal and Juan Lugo, helped spread Seymour's message throughout the Latino community in the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean islands, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.[46] One of the places in the United States where Latino Pentecostalism grew by leaps and bounds was on the East Coast, and specifically in the boroughs of New York. One contributing factor was the massive migration of Puerto Ricans to Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Harlem, whose population had grown so much that it

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42. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 173.
43. Menzies, *Pentecost*, 10.
44. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 22.
45. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 22.
46. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 23.

received the nickname "el Barrio Latino."[47] At the time, Puerto Rico had been impacted

by the Pentecostal movement through the leadership of men and woman such as

"Salomon Feliciano, Francisco Ortiz, Aguedo Collazo, Tomas Alvarez, Secundino

Rodriguez, Lena S. Howe and Juan Lugo," who was an Assemblies of God minister and

the first superintendent[48] of the district of Puerto Rico (elected in September 1920).[49]

With the rapid growth of Hispanics in New York, Juan Lugo eventually migrated to

Brooklyn from Puerto Rico in March 1931 and led a Pentecostal revival that resulted in

the birth and growth of historical Hispanic Pentecostal churches such as "La Sinagoga,

Antioquia, and Juan 3:16" all over the city of New York, and Pentecostal denominations

took notice.[50] Among them was the Assemblies of God, which held their first general

council meeting with more than three hundred Pentecostals in attendance in Hot Springs,

Arkansas, on April 2 -12, 1914.[51] Today the Assemblies of God is among the largest

Pentecostal fellowships in the world with 67,992,330 adherents and 365,157 churches

worldwide.[52] This council also traces its roots to the Azusa Street revival and recognized

the ministry and potential of the Hispanics in New York, eventually authorizing the birth

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47. Samuel Diaz, *La Nave Pentecostal,* (Deerfield, FL: Editorial Vida, 1995), 38-39.

48. The General Council of the Assemblies of God governs its affiliated churches and credentialed ministers by dividing them into "district councils" which fall into two categories: geographical districts and language/ethnic districts. Each district has a "district superintendent" as well as other officers to facilitate ecclesial order and service (Constitution and Bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America and Selected Territories, article X – District Councils). The overall governing leadership contains the following organizational structure: (1) *the executive officers* – which include the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, the general treasurer, the director of A/G World Missions, and the director of A/G U.S. Missions; (2) *the executive presbytery* – which includes all of the executive officers and fifteen other executive presbyters which represent various U.S. geographical regions (voted in by credentialed ministers); (3) *the general presbytery* – which includes the executive officers, the executive presbytery, three district leaders (which automatically includes the district superintendent), and other supplemental leaders such as evangelists, honorary general presbyters, and ex-officio members. See the Constitution and Bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America and Selected Territories, article IX – Officers and Presbyteries of the General Council for more details.

49. Diaz, *La Nave Pentecostal*, 34.

50. Diaz, *La Nave Pentecostal*, 39-43.

51. Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2014), 98.

52. As indicated in the 2015 statistical report of the Assemblies of God.

of the Spanish Eastern Conference which turned into the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God.[53] Today the Spanish Eastern District consists of sixteen states and the District of Columbia; is divided into seventeen sections; has 453 churches; 979 credentialed ministers (with an additional 80 pastors in the process of being credentialed); and approximately 55,038 adherents who worship our Lord every Sunday morning.[54]

The final issue that will help us understand the theological setting will focus on how we educate potential leaders in our denomination. Hispanic Pentecostals, like other Protestant movements, have traditionally built their churches on the teachings founded directly in the Bible, via the ministry of Sunday school. They also train and develop their membership by using "los departamentos," which are ministry departments divided by gender and age such as women, men, youth, and children. These ministries provide an arena where faith is developed and perfected. In this regard, we are much like all the other Protestant churches in the United States. Where we differ can be attributed to a negative sentiment toward the institutions of higher learning that have traditionally permeated our movement. I remember, and in some cases still hear, preachers proclaiming from the pulpit "la letra mata mas el espiritu vivica," which translated is "the letter kills but the Spirit gives life." This may be why Hispanic Pentecostals developed an internal theological training system known as the Bible institute. This is still the major instrument in which Pentecostal churches train their ministers and laity in Christian education and Pentecostal theology. The first Bible institute in the Spanish Eastern District was located in one of the churches I mentioned earlier in this work, "la sinagoga" (my grandmother graduated from there). Today, the Spanish Eastern District has seventy-

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53. Diaz, *La Nave Pentecostal*, 44-53.
54. As indicated in the 2015 statistical report of the Spanish Eastern District, Assemblies of God.

six Bible institutes and twelve schools of theology in sixteen states with more than three thousand students studying the Bible and theology with a Pentecostal perspective.[55] Those who graduate from the Bible institute have acquired the equivalent of two college semesters (30 credits) and qualify for our school of theology, which has an agreement with Global University to help our students achieve a bachelor's degree. It is almost redundant to point out that for the most part these Bible institutes are responsible for the Pentecostal pastors we have in our churches today. These are the men and woman who preach in our pulpits every Sunday morning, who oversee all administrative ministries during the week, and who are engaged regularly in the practice of Christian counseling. One might ask, in today's world, is this sufficient educational training? This concern is one of the issues I intend to study in this thesis-project.

In this first chapter I have presented a general ecclesial setting of the churches in our district. Although we have enjoyed growth since our inception, and although we have systematic educational components and structures that attempt to create a framework of biblical literacy and ministerial service, I have observed that these systems need reformation and supplemental educational ministries to insure the healthy formation of our fellowship. I intend to prove that one of these supplemental ministries should be a systematic discipleship program that focuses on the spiritual development of new converts among Pentecostals. In chapter 2 I will develop a theological framework for the healthy spiritual development of discipleship practices that contribute to a believer's spiritual formation. In chapter 3 I will review the arguments of some of the leading authorities on the dynamics of healthy spiritual formation in the Christian context,

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55. As indicated in the 2015-2016 statistical report of the Spanish Eastern District department of education.

identifying the components that contribute to the believer's spiritual development and the pitfalls that can lead to distorted spiritual formation. In chapter 4 I will reveal the research methodology I used to obtain the pertinent information to measure the specific aspects of the discipleship practices in the Spanish Eastern District, and in chapter 5 I will express my final summaries, conclusions, and any ideas for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Having established the ecclesial setting where the majority of my spiritual

formation has taken place, let us now consider a theological framework for discipleship.

This framework will be accomplished in two ways: first, considering Old Testament

examples of discipleship through Moses' mentorship of Joshua, and the biblical evidence

surrounding the community of prophets; then, considering New Testament examples by

reviewing some principles in the Gospel record of how Christ formed his followers and

cross referencing these principles with the examples given by the apostles.

Old Testament Examples of Discipleship

In this first section, we will review the discipleship practices in the Old Testament

by considering the personal discipleship relationship between Moses and Joshua and by

reviewing the concept of community discipleship of the company of the prophets. This

will give two distinct discipleship dynamics in the Old Testament record that should

suffice in providing a fundamental overview of some of the discipleship practices in the

ancient world.

The personal discipleship dynamic given by the examples of Moses and Joshua

are expressed by Dr. Marcel V. Măcelaru as "one on one" discipleship.[1] Măcelaru

outlines various key discipleship events in the relationship between Moses and Joshua,

and I will explore some of them here in greater detail.

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[1]. Marcel V. Măcelaru, "Discipleship in the Old Testament and Its Context: A Phenomenological Approach," *Plērōma* 13, no. 2 (2011): 11-22.

Before we develop some of the discipleship relationships recorded in the Old

Testament, we should be aware of the fact that according to Măcelaru the "term for

discipleship learning, as seen in the New Testament, is rare."[2] Therefore, when studying

discipleship practices in the ancient world, we must be cognizant of this concern

especially when endeavoring to make any comparisons between the Old and the New

Testaments lest we fall in the proverbial hermeneutical gap that exists between them.

However, Măcelaru affirms that even though the theological term may not be present, the

idea is shown to be present by phrases such as "walking in the ways of another."[3]

Therefore, we can explore these Old Testament discipleship relations and take note of the

pitfalls that are present when making any theological comparisons.

Moses and Joshua

When bearing in mind the mentoring relationship between Joshua and Moses, one

could highlight several discipleship experiences. For example, the biblical record shows

different occasions when Joshua fills in for Moses in a leadership capacity (Josh 17:8;

Num 32:28)[4] or when Moses equips Joshua (Deut 3:21; 31:7−8) and corrects him (Num

11:28−29). Another significant discipleship experience is when Moses changes his name

from Hoshea to Joshua (Num 13:8, 16); it may be appropriate to mention in this context

that Joshua was at least half Moses' age[5] (Exod 33:11; Num 11:28; Josh 14:7, 10). We

would be amiss if we did not allude to the fact that Moses publicly endorsed Joshua's

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2. Măcelaru, "Discipleship in the Old Testament and Its Context," 11-22.
3. Măcelaru, "Discipleship in the Old Testament and Its Context," 11-22.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.
5. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 699.

leadership (Num 27:18-23/Deut 1:38) and consecrated him as leader and successor (Deut 31:14, 23).

These all are valid experiences worthy to be developed further. Nevertheless, the aspect of the relationship between Joshua and Moses that resonates most with me is that Joshua was called Moses' "assistant" (Exod 24:13; 33:11; Num 11:28; Josh 1:1). The word *assistant* is translated from the Hebrew word שָׁרַת (transliterated *Sharath*) and is repeated in all four Scripture references above.[6] This is the same word used to describe Joseph's work in Potiphar's household (Gen 39:4) and his service to the chief cupbearer and the chief baker while in prison (Gen 40:4). It was also used to describe the ministry of the priests in the wilderness tabernacle (Exod 30). The King James Version and the New International Version translate this word as "minister" or "servant." As Moses' assistant, Joshua was privileged to experience great things. For example, the Bible explains that he accompanied Moses during his glorious experience at Sinai (Exod 24:12-13). We should note that he did not accompany Moses all the way to the top of the mountain, yet his experience did surpass that of everyone else.[7] As Moses' assistant, he accompanied Moses when he was in the temporary "tent of meeting" while God spoke to Moses directly (Exod 33:7). Joshua was also granted the honor to guard the tent at "all times" and therefore was privy to all the supernatural and extraordinary manifestations there (Exod 33:11). [8]

It may be important to note here that before Joshua was privileged to be the *Sharath* of Moses, Moses was known as the "servant of the Lord" (Exod 14:31; Num

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6. *James* Strong, *La nueva concordancia Strong exhaustiva: Diccionario de palabras Hebreas y Arameas* (Nashville, TN: Editorial Caribe, 2002), 141.
7. Stuart, *Exodus*, 559.
8. Stuart, *Exodus*, 698.

12:7-8; Deut 34:5). The word *servant* is translated from the Hebrew word עֶבֶד[9]

(transliterated`*ebed)* and can be used as a title in order to communicate honor.[10] Consider

the examples noted in the scriptural references above. In the first reference the Israelites

had already crossed the Red Sea and as a result of their supernatural experience "believed

in the LORD and in his servant Moses" (Exod 14:31). In the second reference, consider

the firm rebuke that the Lord gives Miriam and Aaron when they oppose Moses: "And he

said, hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to

him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is

faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles,

and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my

servant Moses?" (Num 12:6-8). Also, consider the summary of Moses' life given in

sacred text after his death: "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of

Moab, according to the word of the LORD" (Deut 34:5). These examples show that

Moses' leadership was held in high regard based on the title given to him as "servant of

the Lord."

In contrast, Joshua was given the title "servant of Moses." Even after Moses

passed away, during Joshua's leadership, Moses maintained this title.[11] The distinction in

these terms grows in significance when we consider that at the end of his ministry, Joshua

separates himself from the community: "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in

sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River

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9. R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,* vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), 639-40. The transliterated word `*ebed,* from the Hebrew word עֶבֶד, derives from the root word *abad*, which means "to work or serve." This is the same Hebrew word in all three texts.

10. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 291.

11. Consider the following scriptural references: Josh 1:1-2, 13-15; 8:31, 33; 9:24; 11:12, 15; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4-5.

and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:14-15).

Some theologians interpret this act as a grave sin that disqualifies Joshua from being considered a worthy example of successful discipleship succession.[12] However, even if we were to agree that in this example Joshua failed in his leadership role by separating himself from the community (the context shows that Joshua's position caused Israel to repent), should one mistake negate a life of service? Not only that, but the great honor that Scripture bestows on Joshua at the end of his life seems to negate the argument that Joshua is disqualified from being considered a valid example of successful discipleship succession: "After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant (`*ebed*) of the LORD, died, being 110 years old. And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash" (Josh 24:29-30). Although Joshua had to wait until after leaving this earth to receive the credit, it is without question that he left the legacy of being the `*ebed* of the Lord, just like his predecessor.

We initiated our study of the discipleship experiences recorded in the Old Testament by looking at the relationship between Moses and Joshua, which reveals some

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12. Măcelaru, "Discipleship in the Old Testament and Its Context," 11-22. On page 16 he argues that Joshua should not be used as a good example in this regard because at the end of his ministry, during a time of national backsliding similar to that which Moses endured, Joshua does not stand in the gap as did his predecessor. Instead he separates himself from the community (Josh 24:14-15). Although one can argue via the principle of corporate solidarity found throughout the Old and New Testament record that Joshua made a mistake in his judgement as their leader, we can also point to the fact that Israel's response to Joshua's rebuke was repentance (Josh 24:16, 21-22, 24) and therefore was a fruitful endeavor. This point is enhanced in light of the fact that at the end of his life, Scripture upholds Joshua as the "`*ebed* of the Lord" just a few verses later.

of the principles surrounding the concept of personal discipleship. In the next section, let us turn our attention to a community concept of discipleship by studying some of the Old Testament records concerning the company of the prophets.

The Community of Prophets

It would be wise to begin studying the prophetic community in the Old Testament record by addressing its origins. We are introduced to the concept of a community of prophets during a time in Jewish history of national spiritual declination. During the time of the judges, the repeated indictment for the children of Israel was that "in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25). The result of this erroneous ideological position was intermarrying with other nations, idol worship, and social corruption. Even the priesthood was affected by Israel's syncretization. Priests, who were called to instruct the people in truth, grew complacent, and the "tendency of the priesthood was to grow content in the external ritualistic sacerdotal practices."[13] Scripture confirms the complacency of the priesthood through the narrative of the priest Eli and his two sons Hophni and Phinehas, who were also priests and so corrupt that their sacerdotal sacrifices were considered "strange fire."

In this context God calls young Samuel to be not only the next priest in line after Eli but also a national, transitional, and prophetical leader in Israel. Israel's rebellion continues to spiral even though they experience seasons of spiritual renewal through Samuel's ministry; their rebellion culminates in a request for a king in order to emulate the nations that they were called to be separate from. It is in this climate that we are

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13. Benajah H. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, vol. 4: *La monarquia hebrea* (Barcelona: CLIE, 1987), 47.

introduced to the community of prophets. As a result of Israel's request, God speaks to the prophet Samuel concerning three signs that would confirm Saul as his choice. The third sign should be considered the most significant since Samuel spends more time developing the narrative. It is in this context where we are introduced to a "group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying"; shortly after, the Spirit of the Lord "rushes" Saul and he joins them in dancing and prophesying (1 Sam 10:5-10).

Several theologians equate the rise of these communities of prophets as a response to Israel's apostasy demonstrated by their requesting the establishment of their own monarchy.[14] This argument is at least implied in the narrative due to the context and placement of this story in the text, for this is where the company of prophets is first mentioned in the Scriptures. Kenneth Barker and John Kohlenberger characterize the activities of these prophets as "uttering ecstatic praise/oracles" brought about when the "Spirit of the Lord came on a person in power"; when this would happen the "prophet would experience an altered state of consciousness and would be changed into a different person."[15] These theologians also affirm that these prophetic events could be described as "ecstasy," which was "often contagious." This fact would explain how Saul so easily joined in with the company of prophets and was "turned into another man."[16] One could argue that this turning into another man could not be a reference to his character due to the scriptural record of his life. They also argue that "Samuel provided guidance and direction for the movement in its early stages,"[17] a position confirmed by Carrol, who

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14. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.
15. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.
16. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.
17. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.

argues that Samuel was the director and "founder of the first school of the prophets" (citing 1 Sam 19:20).[18] For leadership purposes, we should mention that the "head of a particular group of prophets" would often be called "father (2 Kings 2:12) and/or leader (2 Kings 19:20)."[19]

The next logical point in a study of the Old Testament prophets would be to define and describe their role. Some theologians declare that "a prophet is a spokesperson or mouthpiece for God," those who convey God's "opinions, reactions, intentions, and very words."[20] Others describe them as those who "speak or write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."[21] For more than a thousand years of Israel's history, prophets received messages from Yahweh and delivered them to his people.[22] One of the main purposes for the prophets was to communicate the oracles of God to Israel in order to provide guidance during times of national apostasy. They were considered "champions of the covenant" because of their role in reminding, affirming, and modeling covenant principles to the people of Israel.[23]

When it comes to the role of the prophets in Jewish history, there are three basic distinctions I will develop: literary observances, functional roles, and positional roles. Literary observances is used here to explain different terms used in the text when describing prophets. There are two basic literary distinctions that describe the prophets in the Hebrew text: the *nabhi* ("the called")[24] and *ro'eh/hozeh* ("the seer"). Although theologians argue concerning etymological difference, Benware cites several examples

18. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:47.
19. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.
20. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 503.
21. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:45.
22. Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 189.
23. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 506.
24. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 503.

affirming that Scripture gives a clear indication of the functionality of the *nabhi*.[25] One

example is found in Exod 7:1-2, "And the LORD said to Moses, See, I have made you like

God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet; you shall speak all that I

command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out

of his land." This gives an indication of the function of the *nabhi*. Just as Aaron spoke to

the pharaoh all that Moses told him to say, so prophets spoke to their audience all that

God had to say to them.

Another example cited is from Jer 1:7, "But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I

am only a youth"; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command

you, you shall speak.'" Benware establishes that "the prophet not only would speaks

God's words, but he was seen as God's mouth—the place where God speaks."[26]

The second term, *ro'eh* (sometimes *hozeh*, "the seer"), is used to describe the

prophet's capacity to "receive revelatory visions."[27] In many ways he functioned like the

nabhi, yet when the literary narrative emphasizes *ro'eh* or *hozeh*, there seems to be an

emphasis on how the prophet received his divine message, which could have been

through "dreams, visions or even supernatural illumination."[28]

The second distinction found in the role of the prophets in Jewish history is

functional in nature. First are the preclassical prophets. They can be defined as the

nonwriting prophets who announced God's agenda to the kings.[29] Some notable cases of

these would be the prophet Nathan, who prophesied to King David, as well as the prophet

Elijah, who prophesied to King Ahab. In contrast, classical prophets wrote down the

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25. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 190.
26. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 190.
27. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 503.
28. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 191.
29. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 504.

word of the Lord and announced God's agenda to the people.[30] All the prophetic books in the Bible are examples of "classical prophets."[31] In distinction to the preclassical prophets, who for the most part addressed the king and his court, most of the oracles of the classical prophets addressed the people of Israel.

The final distinction is positional and describes the contrasts between the prophetic gift and the office of the prophet. The office of the prophet can be seen as a ministerial leadership function in concrete service to the Lord's people. Some theologians argue that the office of the prophet began with Samuel,[32] while others declare that it was Moses (Jer 7:25) establishing that although God "spoke directly to men like Abraham, before Moses," the "prophetic office with its various functions began with Moses."[33] Moses explains the prophetic office in Deut 18 by declaring that God would "raise up the prophetic institution and that someday a great prophet would arise."[34] In contrast, the gift of prophecy should be seen as a momentary or temporary ability bestowed upon someone in order to fulfill a particular task ordered by the Almighty. Benajah H. Carrol even goes as far as to say that someone could be bestowed the gift of prophecy for a single occasion.[35] He argues that the gift could be manifested via "dreams, visions, and open ecstatic expressions" formulated in "worship, prayers and singing" which were usually "poetic in nature."[36] The persons graced with just the gift did not necessarily function in it regularly.

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30. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 505.
31. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 505.
32. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:45.
33. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 189.
34. Barker and Kohlenberger, *Expositor's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament*, 394.
35. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:46.
36. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:45.

Having grasped a basic understanding of the origins of the prophetic community and the basic role of the prophets, let us now consider their message. In order to understand the impact prophets had in Israelite society, we must consider the kind of message they communicated. We have already established that the messages transmitted by preclassical prophets were usually addressed to the king and his court either to guide them or judge them. We also established that classical prophets usually transmitted their message to the people of Israel. In this case, the prophets usually rebuked them over social and religious sins, called out issues of social justice, and/or declared a future time of national restoration.[37] Andrew Hill and John Walton compile these kinds of prophetic messages (both preclassical and classical) into four major categories: (1) indictment oracles, which provide a "description of the offense;" (2) judgement oracles, which communicate the "punishment coming because of the offense;" (3) instruction oracles, which communicate "how the recipients were to conduct themselves;" (4) hope oracles, which communicate the "developments after the judgement or hope for deliverance and restoration."[38]

Benware summarizes the prophetic message of the Old Testament prophets in the following three manners. The first reveals how the prophets were "preachers of the already revealed law."[39] This is consistent with the title of "champions of the covenant" given to the prophets. This is due to the fact that the Israelites in "every generation needed to be instructed in the 'constitution' (law) of Israel and to be reminded of their obligation, as Israelites, to adhere to that constitution."[40] The second reveals the prophets

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37. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 505.
38. Hill and Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 509.
39. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 192.
40. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 192.

as predictors of "coming persons and events. Based on the needs of their time, they foretold coming judgements or blessings."[41] The final category of prophet messaging according to Benware was supervisory in nature. This is to say that the prophets functioned "as watchmen over the leaders and the people of Israel. The prophets were the guardians of Israel's constitution. They were the preservers and defenders of the principles on which the theocracy had been built. They did not just preach the law, but called on Israel to obey the law, warning them of certain judgement if they refused."[42]

Now that we have an overview of the prophetic community in the Old Testament, let us conclude this section by briefly highlighting some of the discipleship aspects of this communal principle. It is interesting to note that some theologians equate the Old Testament prophetic community with "theological seminaries."[43] This should not surprise us due to the spiritual climate in Israelite history and the constant need for repentance and renewal. A school for prophets was a remedy for Israelite apostasy. Carrol argues that the scriptural references of several educational prophetic locations indicate organizational structure.[44] He affirms that through these prophetic schools "order was maintained, students were educated, and the regular religious activities" provided a place where their "gifts could be perfected."[45] These prophetic communities not only provided an educational element and an atmosphere in which the prophets' gifts could be developed but also included a music component. The schools provided both "vocal and instrumental" education; Carrol goes as far as attributing David's zeal for music to the passion and enthusiasm exemplified by those who participated in the prophetic

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41. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 192.
42. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 192.
43. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:46.
44. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:47.
45. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:47.

communities.[46] The biblical record describes the members of these prophetic

communities as young (2 Kgs 5:22; 9:4). They lived together (2 Kgs 6:1-2), ate together

(2 Kgs 4:38), and were supported by the Israelite community (2 Kgs 4:42-43).

In this section, we have explored two Old Testament examples of spiritual

formation, the mentorship of Joshua through Moses and the prophetic communities. The

first example revealed principles in the category of personal discipleship, and the second

provided principles in the classification of community discipleship. Both are vital and

efficient guidelines toward the robust formation of those who desire healthy spiritual

growth. The author is aware of other examples in the Old Testament that could have

developed, namely, the discipleship model found in Elijah's mentorship of Elisha.

Although this falls under the possibilities of exploration in this project, the principles

found in this model have been covered through the theological structure already outlined.

Let us now move on to some examples found in the Gospel record and thereby continue

our journey establishing a theological framework for discipleship.

Examples of Discipleship in the New Testament

Having established a framework for discipleship in the Old Testament, I will now

review the Gospel record of how Christ developed his followers and subsequently cross

reference these ideas with the examples given by the apostles. An exhaustive study of the

ministry of our Lord would reveal an amount of information too vast to consider here.

Therefore, I will summarize Christ's ministry with four principles which will be

sufficient in achieving a framework for discipleship in the Gospels. At the end of each

principle given, I will cross reference the idea with examples found in the Epistles and/or

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46. Carrol, *Comentario Biblico*, 4:52.

in the book of Acts, written by the apostles. These principles are (1) discipleship requires exemplary leadership—Jesus was an example worthy of being followed; (2) discipleship involves evangelism—Jesus invited others to follow him; (3) discipleship encompasses love and compassion—Jesus displayed a genuine concern for others; and (4) discipleship entails equipping others—Jesus taught and provided praxis for his followers.

Discipleship Requires Exemplary Leadership

One of the discipleship principles we find in the Gospel record is that discipleship requires exemplary leadership. As I study the Gospels, the first thing that resonates with me concerning Jesus' ministry is his extraordinary leadership abilities. Surely Jesus displayed a level of leadership that his followers found worthy of imitating. This is evidenced by the fact that since the beginning of his ministry the disciples believed in him. John records the following statement after Christ performed his first miracle: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). Also, consider Luke's recording of our Lord's reputation at the beginning of his ministry: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (Luke 4:14-15). Luke also records Christ's resume, declared through Peter some years after Jesus completed his earthly assignment,

> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with

him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. (Acts 10:36-39)

These Scripture references give us an idea of how Jesus' followers revered his leadership capability. According to Peter, some of his followers believed in him to the degree of abandoning their families, houses, and even businesses (Matt 19:27-30). In light of the commitment Christ's followers made in support of his leadership, here is a list, acquired through an overview of the Gospel of Matthew, of the examples of his demonstrated leadership abilities:

1. Jesus showed the capacity to overcome temptation (Matt 4:1-11; 26:36-46).

2. Jesus displayed great communication skills (Matt 4:23-25; 5–7; 13:1-52; 18:21-35; 20:1-16; 24:36-51; 25; 28:16-20).

3. Jesus demonstrated authority over evil spirits (Matt 8:28-34; 12:22-32; 17:14-20).

4. Jesus solved ministerial and theological problems (Matt 9:14-17; 12:1-8, 46-50; 16:1-4; 17:24-27; 20:20-28; 21:23-27; 22:15-40).

5. Jesus delegated his authority and assignments to his disciples (Matt 10:1-15; 26:17-25).

6. Jesus confronted the corrupt religious establishment (Matt 21:12-17; 23:1-36).

These examples demonstrated by Christ and his great following suffice to confirm that discipleship requires exemplary leadership. This principle not only was modeled by our Lord but was also was manifested and proclaimed by the apostles to those who followed them long after the ascension of Jesus. Consider for example the exhortation of the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians while warning them against idleness:

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. (2 Thess 3:6-9)

We have a clear example of how Paul, and the spiritual leaders with him, understood that their lifestyle was an essential component to those who were following them. They understood that although they had the right to enjoy the fruit of their own ministerial labor, they would rather work hard in order to assure that their followers learned a dedicated, selfless ministerial work ethic.

Another apostle who exemplified this primary leadership principle given to us by our Lord was the apostle Peter. In the context of the exhortation below, Peter communicates this principle to spiritual leaders already pastoring the churches of our Lord: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:1-3). I am confident that the examples of Christ exemplary leadership taken from the Gospel of Matthew, as well as Peter's and Paul's literary exhortations, give enough evidence to declare that effective discipleship practices require exemplary leadership. Perhaps discipleship is most effective when the person who is teaching and preaching is modeling it first.

Discipleship Involves Evangelism

Now that we have established the first principle, let us move on to our next New Testament observation of discipleship: discipleship involves evangelism. Before we establish this principle in the ministry of Christ, we must first consider defining the theological term *evangelism*. According to some theologians, evangelism should be defined as the process of "announcing the good news" of Christ Jesus, which is taken from an etymological exercise from the Greek word *euangelion* (found seventy-two times in the New Testament).[47] This word is often translated "to preach"[48] and should not be confused with or compared with "successful results" as if to say, "We evangelized today because many souls confessed Christ as savior."[49] This term must be understood as the act and not just the result. Dr. Schweer, a retired senior professor of evangelism, recognizes another crucial element to evangelism and defines it as "an active invitation to people that they might respond to the message of grace and surrender to God in Christ."[50] He argues that evangelism is not just a New Testament phenomenon but has been active via the actions of a loving God throughout the Old Testament narrative.[51] This idea is consistent with scholars who include "the context of kingdom principles" together with the mission of creating a "new community" in their definition of evangelization.[52] In summary, evangelism can be defined not only as the announcement of the good news of Christ Jesus but also as the act of inviting people to follow God and therefore join the

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47. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, *Nuevo Diccionario de Teologia* (El Paso, TX: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1992), 385-86.

48. Leticia S. Calcada, *Diccionario Bíblico Ilustrado Holman* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 593.

49. Ferguson and Wright, *Nuevo Diccionario de Teologia*, 386.

50. Calcada, *Diccionario Bíblico Ilustrado Holman*, 593.

51. Calcada, *Diccionario Bíblico Ilustrado Holman*, 593.

52. Ferguson and Wright, *Nuevo Diccionario de Teologia*, 386.

kingdom community. This robust understanding of evangelism paves the way for the

principle that is before us: discipleship involves evangelism.

Evangelism in the ministry of Jesus

As we review the Gospel record we will find several references where Jesus

extended invitations to be followed; some were accepted and others refused. Let us

consider first some examples of positive responses of Christ's invitation. The first that

resonates with me is the invitation Jesus extended to Levi the tax collector; the narrative

reveals insight of Christ's heart and mind. Jesus not only invites Levi to be one of his

disciples but also was willing to suffer the religious backlash of the Pharisees and scribes

when he entered into Levi's house that was full of people that the religious establishment

considered disgraceful (see Luke 5:27-32). Jesus' passion for the lost is one of the

primary motivating factors of his invitation in this account and is a motif throughout the

Gospel record. Jesus' invitation to Peter, James, and John is also worth noting especially

due to the fact that this trio eventually became the members of his inner circle. The

intriguing aspect of their invitation was the fact that they were common fisherman. There

was nothing special about them, yet Jesus invited them to be a vital part of his

revolutionary kingdom (Luke 5:1-11). The value of simplicity and the dignity of all

humans is what resonates in this case. We all would do well to be continually reminded

of this principle.

Another important example of the positive responses of Christ's evangelistic

ministry was the choosing of the twelve apostles who would be responsible for building

on the foundation that Christ left for them and eventually for his church (Luke 6:12-16;

Matt 10:1-15; Mark 3:13-19). Scripture teaches us that Jesus separated himself from the group in order to spend the night in prayer prior to inviting them to be his co-laborers in the most important endeavor the earth has ever known.

We could not end this section without mentioning the great enthusiasm demonstrated by the seventy-two disciples Jesus commissioned; their response could be considered as one of the most enthusiastic in the Gospels: "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20). In summary, Jesus invited all kinds of people to connect with his movement of being reconciled with God and to join him in being part of God's kingdom. Those who were wise followed him.

Having considered some of the positive responses of Jesus' evangelistic ministry, let us note a few of the negative ones. The one that immediately comes to mind is the story of the rich young ruler (Matt 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-27). In this case, Jesus' invitation comes only after the young man asks questions concerning eternal life. The text seems to imply the rich ruler's internal struggle between the teachings of the Torah, which he apparently knew well, and his love of riches. According to his own confession he seemed to be in keeping with the requirements of the law, but perhaps the exemplary leadership of Christ impressed upon him a conviction that he was lacking something. Thus is recorded the affirmation and inquisition: "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus' response is an invitation that left the poor rich ruler "sorrowful;" "Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" Jesus invited, the ruler's heart was provoked, but his love for riches revealed his true nature. He rejected the greatest

invitation he would ever get in his life. Truly, although he may have been rich in material possessions, he ended up living as a poor man in comparison with what he would have possessed if he would have embraced Christ's invitation.

There were many like him who rejected the call of the Savior. In concluding this section, here is a list of others who had negative responses of Christ's evangelistic ministry according to the Gospel of Mark. First, consider the scribes from Jerusalem who attributed Christ's miracles to the result of him being "possessed by Beelzebul" (Mark 3:22-30); the Gerasene herdsman and businessmen who begged Jesus to "depart from their region" because he had cast demons into pigs who then "rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea" (Mark 5:1-20); the citizens of his home town, Nazareth, who "took offense at him" and cast doubt on his ministry by pointing out that he was a "carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon" (Mark 6:1-6); the chief priests, scribes, and elders (Mark 11:15-19, 27-33; 14:1-2; 15:1-5, 21-32); the high priest (Mark 14:53-65); Roman soldiers (Mark 15:16-20); and the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 7:1-13; 8:11-13; 12:18-27). These are the examples of those who rejected our Lord's evangelistic ministry according to the Gospel of Mark.

Evangelism in the ministry of the apostles

Having established that the Gospels communicate an evangelistic component to Jesus' ministry, let us reflect on a few examples of the evangelistic component in the Epistles, given to us by the apostles. The first apostle who resonates is the apostle Paul. His passion and zeal toward the spread of the gospel after his conversion alone is a testament to this principle of evangelism. He went on at least three missionary journeys,

trained believers in Antioch (Acts 11:26), had to flee for his life to Lystra and Derbe

because of his evangelistic preaching (Acts 14:6-7), was stoned and nearly killed in

Lystra (Acts 14:19-20), was thrown into prison in Philippi after casting out a demon from

a girl who had a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-25), had to flee for his life at

Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10), was imprisoned in Jerusalem (Acts 21:26-36), was

shipwrecked on the way to Rome (Acts 27), was bitten by a poisonous snake on the

island of Malta (Acts 28:1-6), was under house arrest in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30-

31), and finally was martyred under the emperor Nero. His willingness to suffer and pay

the ultimate price for the sake of the call is summarized in two declarations. The first

declaration is, "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has

accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the

power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem

and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ"

(Rom 15:18-19). The second declaration is, "To the weak I became weak, that I might

win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save

some" (1 Cor 9:22).

The concluding apostle we should mention here is Peter. Although his

evangelistic ministry may not be as detailed and extensively recorded as Paul's, we still

have enough information to make a case. For example, Peter preached a prophetic-

evangelistic sermon at the feast of Pentecost that resulted in three thousand converts

being baptized in water (Acts 2:14-41). He preached an evangelistic message again at

Solomon's Portico, and although this message resulted in his temporary imprisonment,

many souls were converted as a result (Acts 3:11-26; 4:1-4). He confronted the rulers,

elders, scribes, and the high priest who questioned under whose authority they were

ministering (Acts 4:5-22), and he preached the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and his

household, who were converted and baptized in water (Acts 10:9-48). Surely Peter's

evangelistic spirit and ministry was a direct result of him being properly trained by the

Master himself. Therefore, we can say with certainty that in order to properly disciple

someone you must first share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them, which proves that

discipleship involves evangelism.

Discipleship Encompasses Love and Compassion

The third overarching principle I observed while analyzing the ministry of our

Lord as recorded in the Gospels can be stated as follows: discipleship encompasses love

and compassion. If one thing exalts Jesus above all the other religious leaders in human

history, it is the love and compassion he showed toward other human beings.

Compassion in the ministry of Jesus

A synopsis of Luke's Gospel, focusing specifically on this theme, speaks

volumes. Let us begin by considering one of the most significant aspects of Christ's

ministry, his power to heal the sick. According to the Scriptures, Jesus healed people

because of the great compassion he felt toward them and not in order to make a name for

himself (Matt 14:14; Luke 5:14). Luke records several examples of Jesus' love and

compassion demonstrated through healing the sick (Luke 4:38-40, 5:12-16, 17-26; 6:17-

19; 7:1-10; 8:4-48; 9:37-43; 17:11-19; 18:35-43). He even healed on the Sabbath day,

proving his compassion for humans went above and beyond the legalistic applications of

the law propagated by the superficially pious religious leaders of the day (Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6).

Jesus also showed compassion toward sinners in a religious context of extreme intolerance (Luke 5:27-32; 7:36-50). He raised a widow's son from the dead because he felt compassion for his mother; one of several examples of how Jesus exercised authority over death (Luke 7:11-17; 8:49-56). He even showed empathy and provided dignity for women, who were considered second-class citizens according to Jewish tradition (Luke 8:1-3). All these examples not only show the love and compassion of our Lord toward people, but also the frequency of his healings provide for us an implicit principle for discipleship; for he demonstrated his power to heal the sick in the presence of his disciples, who would eventually follow in his footsteps.

The greatest display of the love of Christ toward all humanity is the passion that compelled him to complete the mission of the Father by hanging on a tree for the sins of all humankind (Luke 23:26-55). The message of the gospel is clear, Adam's sin resulted in a gateway of iniquity that surged into all the world which in turn caused death to reign unto all humankind (Rom 5:12-14). Therefore, God sent his only begotten Son into the world to remedy this by dying on the cross (John 3:16). Christ's passion for the fulfillment of this mission is made clear with the following statement (made in the context of an exposition on the nature of pastors): "I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17b-18). The love and compassion of our Lord is further displayed by keeping his promise of resurrection; on the third day he rose from the grave (Luke 24:1-12).

Luke provides two final accounts of the compassion of our Lord before ending his record of the life and ministry of Jesus the Christ (Luke 24:13-49). The first account is demonstrated by his appearing on the road to Emmaus to a pair of disciples who were disheartened and confused because of the death of their teacher. Luke is the only one who recorded this story, and it has always been my favorite postresurrection account because of the fact that they were not part of the Twelve. They were two ordinary followers of Jesus whose lives had been shattered over recent events surrounding the Christ. Jesus loved them so, two ordinary men, that he found time during his limited postresurrection schedule to minister to them and heal their hearts. The second postresurrection account narrates Jesus' appearance to the Twelve, when he encouraged the disciples and confirmed that he was indeed alive. This account was also recorded by at least one of the other Evangelists.

Compassion in the ministry of the apostles

This discipleship principle of loving and having compassion on people carried over to the apostles' ministry. In the beginning of the life of the church (through the leadership of the apostles), love and compassion for one another became a testimony for the Jewish community. This is made clear by their willingness to sell their own "possessions and belongings and distribute the proceeds" to all who were in need. This practice produced a harvest of souls entering into the life of the church on a daily basis (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 6:1). Compassion for the sick was also evident as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to heal, just as their Master had (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 8:4-8; 9:32-43; 14:8-11; 19:11-12; 20:7-12; 28:7-10).

The apostles not only demonstrated the love and compassion they witnessed through the life and ministry of our Lord, but also they left a written record to make sure that this principle would continue to be practiced among all future Christians. The apostle John is a great example here. After desiring revenge on the Samaritans because they were not interested in receiving Jesus' ministry, John asks Jesus to kill them with fire from heaven and Jesus rebukes him (Luke 9:51-55). Perhaps this was a turning point in John's life and heart, because he becomes the apostle who frequently inclined on the Savior's chest (John 13:21-30, King James Version). His transformation in this regard is evident in the wealth of written material on the preeminence of Christ's love in the life of the believer.[53]

A significant concluding literary example relevant in this case would be the apostle Paul's famous love chapter (1 Cor 13). Since the Corinthians struggled with leadership divisions and prideful feelings of spiritual superiority (to name only some of their issues), Paul writes a literary masterpiece to ground them and perhaps remind them of the most important element of spiritual health, love. This principle is affirmed by the chiastic structure represented here; 1 Cor 13 interrupts teaching about spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12), which continues in 1 Cor 14.[54] The message to the Corinthians, and to the church today, is clear: love is the central theme of Christianity. It always has, and it always will be, paramount. For it is written, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

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53. For a robust theological presentation of John's theology in this regard see the three epistles that bear his name.

54. Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 217-18.

Discipleship Entails Equipping Others

The fourth and final discipleship principle we will consider as part of an overview of the Gospel record teaches us that discipleship entails equipping others. One of the ministerial activities that occupied the majority of Christ's ministry was pedagogical in nature. As a pedagogue, Jesus not only was a skilled communicator but also provided praxis for his disciples as a tool for spiritual formation and ministerial preparation. These principles can be found in Jesus' prophetic and pedagogical ministries, and a brief overview of the Gospel according to John will confirm this.

Jesus' ministry of equipping

Consider the following observations of Jesus' rabbinic ministry. Jesus was called Rabbi throughout his ministry (John 1:35-42, 49; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8). Jesus taught on salvation and regeneration (John 3:1-21); on worship (John 4:19-26); on evangelism (John 4:31-42; 12:44-50); on discipleship (John 8:31-38; 12:20-26; 15:1-11; 18-25); on Christian service and love (John 13:12-17, 31-35; 15:12-17); on eternal life (John 3:16; 14:1-14); on the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31; 15:26-27; 16:1-15), and most of all on his own divinity (John 5:19-47; 6:25-59; 8:12-30, 48-59; 10:1-18, 22-42; 11:17-27).

These observations confirm that Jesus formed his followers by equipping them through teaching. Jesus also equipped his disciples by giving them ministerial opportunities to apply the teaching he had given them. One example of this can be found in Matthew's Gospel, when Christ commissioned them for a ministerial assignment:

> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without

paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town." (Matt 10:5-15)

The reference above communicates one of several occasions when Jesus provided an opportunity for his disciples to practice what they had been equipped to do.

Another example that perhaps may not be as obvious is found in the instance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Jesus takes advantage of another opportunity to give to his disciples a life lesson I assume they never forgot. During supper, before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus "rose from supper, he laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:4-5). According to the narrative, when it was Peter's turn, he initially refused, assuming that what Christ was doing was beneath the one he recognized as being "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Once Jesus explained to him the significance of this aspect of ministry, Peter once again submitted to his master. We can recognize this moment as discipleship praxis due to Peter's submission.

Yet another moment came when Jesus affirms that he was expecting the disciples to continue this aspect of ministry: "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have

given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15).

The positions above reveal examples of Christ as pedagogue as he provided praxis, in the context of his rabbinic ministry, in order to equip his disciples. The final example worthy of notation that establishes the principle that discipleship requires equipping others is Jesus' prophetic ministry. Throughout the Gospel record we have evidence that Jesus "went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Matt 4:23; 9:35). Jesus' prophetic ministry served not only as a confirmation of his status as the Jewish Messiah but also was a tool for discipleship. Jesus preached and healed the sick throughout his ministry, and every sermon and every healing consolidated the disciples' belief in him.

This suggests that preaching is a key communicative instrument that has the potential to provide healthy spiritual formation to those who hear and obey. Orlando Costas affirms this argument while defining preaching as a communicative process: "preaching is an act of communication . . . communication involves the mental and emotional processes; it constitutes an interactive social experience where ideas, attitudes and feelings are shared with other people in order to modify or influence their conduct."[55] John MacArthur also sustains this position while emphasizing the recognition of the use of proper hermeneutics and exegesis during sermon preparation and delivery: "the key principles of interpretation learned and developed through practice, will provide a great

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55. Orland Costas, *Comunicación por medio de la predicación* (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1989), 33.

deal of help in determining what the word of God says and means."[56] And to drive this

point home, the homiletical guru himself, Haddon Robinson, shares the importance of a

single idea while unpacking his famous "big idea" concept in preaching: "ideally each

sermon is the explanation, interpretation, or application of a single dominant idea

supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of scripture."[57]

This final point states clearly that Christ's prophetic ministry involved preaching and his

messages contributed to the healthy spiritual formation of those who listened and obeyed.

Since preaching communicates to the audience ideas taken from the canon of Scripture

for the purpose of transformation, we can stand assured that preaching is a key aspect of

equipping others, which is an essential part of the discipleship process.

The equipping ministry of the apostles

The equipping ministry of Christ had a profound effect on the apostles, who in

turn embraced and applied this key aspect of discipleship in their own ministries. If we

start off with the aspect of preaching, we will discover an abundant supply of scriptural

resources that support this claim. In the preceding discipleship principle, I outlined

several examples of Peter's and Paul's evangelistic messages, and those examples can

also carry over to our present concern. Therefore, let us consider other examples in order

to present variety in our arguments. We can begin with Stephen, the first recorded martyr

of the church. During his trial he preached a glorious message in the presence of the high

priest and those who accused him of blasphemy (Acts 7:1-53). Although his preaching

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56. John MacArthur, *La predicación: Como predicar biblicamente* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Group, 2009), 143.
57. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 35.

resulted in him being unjustly stoned to death, there is no doubt that his message and ministry in the face of danger affected the life of several witnesses, especially Saul of Tarsus. We can also present the ministry of Philip, who preached the gospel in Samaria. Under his prophetic ministry, Samaria experienced a revival in which men and women, small and great, became followers of Christ (Acts 8:4-25).

The apostles also equipped others through their pedagogical ministries. From the beginning they experienced persecution because of the effect of their teaching throughout the region: "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us'" (Acts 5:27-28). Other examples include Philip teaching the Ethiopian eunuch the gospel principles concerning baptism (Acts 8:26-40), Barnabas's teaching ministry in Antioch (Acts 11:19-24), and the great teaching ministry to both Jews and Gentiles through the apostle Paul that recorded in the book of Acts and in the epistles he wrote to edify the church. The examples given in this section provide a clear indication of the apostles continuing in the tradition they received through Christ and confirms that one of the essential elements of discipleship is the equipping ministry.

I have submitted four basic discipleship principles based on an overview of the life and ministry of our Lord according to the Gospel record. I have developed sufficient literary evidence to conclude that discipleship requires exemplary leadership, involves evangelism, encompasses love and compassion, and entails equipping others. I have also argued that these principles were continued by Jesus' apostles, a point that further

solidifies these basic principles. We shall now move forward and examine the essential elements of spiritual formation according to some of the leading scholars of our day.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

In chapter 1 I presented the setting of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God and gave an overview of the history and spiritual climate of our ecclesiology as I have observed it for over twenty-five years. In chapter 2 I established a theological framework for discipleship in the Old Testament by reviewing personal discipleship principles through the mentorship of Joshua by Moses, and communal discipleship principles through the example given by the community of prophets. I also presented an overview of discipleship in the New Testament by considering Christ's ministry recorded in the Gospels and then cross referencing those principles with the ecclesial practices of the apostles. In this chapter I will present a literary review of leading theologians in the field. The resources below represent the literary work that is most applicable to this thesis-project.

The Nature of Discipleship

One of the most important goals of achieving healthy spirituality is making sure we can comprehend terms by defining them accurately; an essential expert in this regard is the late Dallas Willard. In *The Great Omission*, he compiles "previously published articles and addresses on discipleship, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual growth and formation"[1] in order to bring awareness of the lack of true discipleship in the church in

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1. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 15.

North America today. He tells of the disappointment that today's version of Christianity has produced among those inside and outside the walls of the church. He attributes this disappointment to the "great disparity" that exists between "the hope for life expressed in Jesus—found in the bible" and the "day to day behavior, inner life, and social presence of most of those" who call themselves followers of Christ.[2]

This discrepancy is what Willard calls the "great omission," and it flows from one of two North American ideologies. The first stems from believing that a person can be a Christian without being a disciple of our Lord. Therefore, achieving the title "Christian" becomes the goal of discipleship and achieving it (a false security). The second comes from a common misunderstanding that the Great Commission has little to do with local missions and everything to do with global missions. This tends to cause Christians to believe that the Great Commission is the work we do *out there* in contrast to the work that is needed *in here*. In order to bring clarity to the subject, the author defines Christian spiritual formation (another word for discipleship) as the "redemptive process of forming the inner human world so that it takes on the character of the inner being of Christ himself."[3] He further defines discipleship by explaining some of the primary elements or activities involved, which include the "action of the Holy Spirit and the word of the gospel that awakens those dead in trespasses and sins;" the constant "seeking on the part of the individual disciple and of groups of disciples," as well as "fasting, solitude, silence, listening prayer, scripture memorization, frugal living, confession, journaling, submission to the will of others as appropriate, and well-used spiritual direction."[4]

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2. Willard, *Great Omission*, 14-17.
3. Willard, *Great Omission*, 105.
4. Willard, *Great Omission*, 106-7.

Jonathon Dodson also recognizes this gospel omission. In *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, he is transparent concerning his own spirituality as he tells of his failed attempts at achieving authentic discipleship. His literary effort is both pragmatic and theological, and it provide a definition of true discipleship, addresses the heart of a disciple, and tackles the practical aspects of discipleship. He contends that his failed attempts at achieving authentic discipleship streamed from an ideology that teaches that "being a disciple means making disciples" and focuses the majority of its attention on either evangelism or training for hierarchical ecclesial positions.[5] This "professional" brand of spiritual formation strives to keep discipleship focused on the believer's victories, faith, and success stories. In contrast, the author argues that transparency in discipleship is essential because "making disciples requires not only 'sharing out faith,' but also sharing our lives-failures and successes, disobedience and obedience."[6] Real discipleship is "messy, imperfect, and honest."[7] This is the premise of this book; discipleship with the "gospel at the center—a constant, gracious repetition of repentance and faith in Jesus, who is sufficient for my failures and strong for my successes; *imperfect people, clinging to a perfect Christ, being perfected by the Spirit*."[8]

Dodson argues that in order to grasp the true meaning of discipleship we must understand that the biblical language of a disciple focuses on identity and not just functionality.[9] According to Dodson, believers are "disciples first and parents, employees, pastors, deacons and spouses second."[10] The foundation for his argument

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5. Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 15.
6. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 15.
7. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 15.
8. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 18.
9. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29.
10. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29.

consists of three essential aspects; discipleship is rational, discipleship is relational, and discipleship is missional.[11] His position on the rational aspect of discipleship is based on the Greek word *mathetes*, which can be understood to mean "learner."[12] This etymological argument stems from the "rational connotation among the Sophists" in Greek culture, a historical narrative pointed out by the famous philosopher Socrates.[13] The relational aspect of discipleship is drawn from the connection that Jesus afforded to his disciples. He highlights the family dynamic characteristics of Jesus' life and ministry and argues that disciples must be more than students; they should become family.[14] The missional facet of discipleship focuses on ministerial realities. This is to say that although discipleship should not focus primarily on external evangelistic endeavors, these activities must be a part of its existence. Dodson affirms this and expounds on the missional aspect of "going, baptizing, and teaching" as essential for true discipleship.[15] Therefore, a disciple must be a learner, considered family, and a missionary.

Bill Hull recognizes the significance of properly defining the concept of discipleship in *Conversion and Discipleship*. In it he states, "One problem in the current discussion of discipleship is while we are using the same words, we don't all agree on the meaning of those words."[16] The lack of ecclesial unity is such a vital aspect of the mission of the church that it should not be considered a secondary issue but one that is of the most utmost vitality and significance. Hull attributes this ecclesial deficiency to the

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11. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29-31.
12. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29.
13. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29.
14. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 30.
15. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 31-38.
16. Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One Without the Other* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 22.

lack of a "theology of discipleship" in the evangelical church today (an idea given to him by his mentor).[17]

This concept is significant because theology not only defines important concepts and terminology concerning Christian doctrine but also gives the church the tools in which it practices its faith in a fallen world. According to the author, this theology of discipleship must examine, among other things, one important concern relevant to the church in North America; it must address "the relationship between discipleship and salvation."[18] Far too many confessing Christians in our nation tend to "treat the experience of conversion as something entirely separate from the process of becoming a disciple."[19] This separation has led to a common problem in the church today; people "profess to be Christians yet believe that they do not need to follow Jesus."[20] For these adherents, being "saved or being a Christian has no serious connection with an ongoing commitment to being formed into the image of Christ."[21] Therefore, Hull defines discipleship as that which "occurs when someone answers the call to learn from Jesus and others how to live his or her life as though Jesus was living it. As a result, the disciple becomes the kind of person who naturally does what Jesus did."[22]

To qualify his statement and solidify his argument, the author discusses "three dimensions" in his attempt to establish for the reader a theology of discipleship. The first is the need to "restore our understanding of salvation;" the second is the need to "do the work of scriptural interpretation and theological reformulation;" and the third is to

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17. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 20.
18. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 21.
19. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 21.
20. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 21.
21. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 21.
22. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 20.

"address the practices and methods" of the church.[23] I have summarized these three dimensions of his presentation into six discipleship principles. The first establishes that making disciples must begin with a clear and precise message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.[24] Hull presents a skeleton version of the gospel message, extracted from 1 Cor 15:3-4, with three major points: "Christ died, Christ was buried, and Christ was resurrected."[25] He makes it clear that although this outline is helpful for an initial assessment, several variations of it are being communicated today, and the majority of these variations presented by Hull are characterized as contributing factors to unhealthy discipleship practices.[26]

Of the six variations, only the message that incorporates "kingdom characteristics" is ideal; those principles are (1) "the kingdom of God grows by investing in a majority population;" (2) the "kingdom gospel teaches us to obey God by living intentionally in the middle of diversity and ambiguity;" (3) the "kingdom gospel reminds us that growth is slow but will ultimately permeate everything."[27] The second principle teaches that discipleship includes the call to follow the life and teaching of Jesus.[28] The third affirms that discipleship is the lifestyle of all those who have truly experienced salvation.[29] The fourth states that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a necessity in the discipleship process.[30]

In this point, I push back against Hill's argument that the Pentecostal movement does not see discipleship as "necessary for salvation" and that our theological perspective

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23. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 22.
24. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 24.
25. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 25-26.
26. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 33.
27. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 41-42.
28. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 49.
29. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 71-72.
30. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 141.

tends to "undermine the idea that our conversion to Christ necessarily entails a life of committed discipleship."[31] In my experience of preaching, teaching, and pastoring Pentecostals, I would argue that we tend to incorporate an excessive amount of emphasis on discipleship as a necessity for salvation (if that is even possible). Traditionally, in most Pentecostal circles, members must continually "work out their salvation" because their eternal security is never certain. The truth is that most Pentecostals traditionally have argued that their ability to follow Christ is what will determine their ultimate eternal destiny, and their evangelical and missionary efforts for the past one hundred years are proof of that. This is to say that discipleship is seen as a necessary response to saving grace and must not be excluded. Unfortunately, some have seen the external works of grace as a necessity for salvation and not a sign or evidence of salvation.

The fifth principle I see in Hull's book is that true discipleship will always result in the establishment of a church,[32] and the final principle affirms that true discipleship results in a world revolution of transformed hearts.[33]

The experts above have helped paint a clearer picture of the nature of biblical discipleship. We now move forward by continuing to examine the literary labor of experts whose work is relevant to this project and specific to the essentials of spiritual formation.

The Essentials of Spiritual Formation

One expert in the Hispanic Pentecostal community is Roberto Amparo Rivera. In his *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, he endeavors to "awaken our conscience

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31. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 113.
32. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 141.
33. Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 220.

towards an understanding of how the spiritual disciplines facilitate and enrich the life of the believer."[34] Rivera argues that the roots of the disciplines are embedded in Judaism and some of its practices can be useful for ecclesial observations.[35] He contends that the spiritual disciplines should be defined as "the life practices of Christians that equip them to incarnate the life of Christ into the world."[36] They are the "manifestations of the presence and the grace of God and the human responses to these manifestations."[37] He emphasizes that spiritual disciplines can be "anything and everything we offer to God in response to his love towards us, both voluntarily and involuntarily, which he in turn uses according to his sovereign will."[38]

This concept would definitely be considered out of the box in most Pentecostal circles. Offering "anything and everything" to God would be inconsistent to Pentecostal's theology of sanctification. In the mind of most Pentecostal pastors, the "things of this world" should never, and in no way, intermingle with the holy and sacred practices of the church. Rivera is aware of this contrast and includes in his list of the disciplines practices that most Pentecostals would not take issue with. The list includes "prayer, fasting, the reading of scripture, liturgical participation, koinonia, the confession of sins, forgiveness received and given, the giving of offerings, and the life of the church."[39]

One of these disciplines that resonated with me was how Rivera wrote about prayer. According to the author, the Jewish community does not attribute answered prayer as the basis of God hearing them or doing what they asked. Their focus is on the

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34. Roberto A. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2008), 16.

35. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 27-28, 35.

36. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 19, 21.

37. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 24.

38. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 25.

39. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 20.

manifestation of the presence of God. In other words, if God's Spirit is somehow made manifest during their time of prayer, then God heard them and it was not in vain, independent of if he answered or not. For them, God's answers by showing up, whether he says yes or no. This is why I mentioned above that Rivera believes the church can benefit from how some of the Jewish community traditionally have practiced the disciplines. Most Christians, in twenty-first-century America, are not satisfied unless they see the tangible results of their prayers. The manifest presence of God is not necessarily what they want. If God fails to do for them what they ask, then discouragement that leads to spiritual stagnation usually sets in.

One final discipline that resonated with me is Rivera's presentation of Justo Gonzalez's five levels of biblical reflection: "the seeking of information, the context, the message of the author, divine intention, and the voice of the Spirit."[40] The manner in which Christians understand, relate, interpret, and practice their faith was the premise of the arguments presented in the first section of this chapter. The scholars agreed that true discipleship does not exist without disciples living out their faith in a transparent, relevant, and consistent way. Among the steps outlined by the author, it should come as no surprise to most Pentecostals that the author emphasizes a great deal on this last practice. Historically, Pentecostals have been passionate seekers of the Holy Spirit and have built an entire movement on him. Perhaps it would come as a surprise to some how Rivera explains the discipline. His emphasis is more cognitive than emotional. He reminds the reader that Christians should take more time reflecting on Scripture in order to discern what the Spirit is telling us in consistency to the exegeted text. This emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit is something that all evangelicals can agree with.

40. Rivera, *Introducción a las Disciplinas Espirituales*, 55-57.

One of the most influential literary compositions on this subject for almost four decades now is Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*. Like some of the experts mentioned above, he recognizes that for many believers in North America, the church experience has been superficial, mundane, and dry (and he wrote this forty years ago).[41] His experience pastoring for the first time confirmed this as he observed how his ministry was unable to produce the fruit he enthusiastically longed for. He also acknowledged that for some Christians the subject of spiritual disciplines produces images of exhaustion and hard work that can result in anxiety and despair.[42] Foster responds to the concerns of the travail associated with the disciplines by clarifying the church's understanding of the grace of God. He argues that grace is "free but is not cheap;" discipline must follow the gift; and "virtue is hard, very hard indeed."[43] Ultimately, the reward of peace, healthy spirituality, and growth make the price worth the effort.

With these two driving forces in mind, the author gives a threefold presentation of the classics that focuses on the internal, external, and corporate spiritual disciplines of the believer. In his first section, Foster incorporates meditation, prayer, fasting, and study as crucial components of the believer's inner practices of the disciplines. He defines Christian meditation as the "ability to hear God's voice and obey his word."[44] The purpose is to develop a "familiar friendship with Jesus" that results in the "light and life of Christ" residing deep inside us.[45]

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41. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 2.
42. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 4-5.
43. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 8.
44. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 17.
45. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 19.

Foster's passion for prayer began during his first pastoral assignment via the influence of two believers, Bill and Beth.[46] Bill was a pastor of a significant Lutheran church in his community, and Beth was a nurse and the head elder of Foster's church. Both taught him the intrinsic value of the discipline of prayer. In this chapter, he argues the biblical, theological, and practical principles that confirm the need every Christian has to establish prayer as a lifestyle.[47] Concerning the lost discipline of fasting, the author establishes a theology for fasting,[48] the purpose for fasting,[49] and the correct practice of fasting.[50] He concludes his first section by considering the discipline of study. One thing that resonated with me was the author's definition of study: "study is a specific kind of experience in which through carefully attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction."[51] In contrast to what we observed with Rivera's presentation, Foster argues that study habits as a spiritual discipline can be extended to include extrabiblical resources, nature, and even science. His methodology for proper study habits is expressed in four steps: repetition, concentration, comprehension, and reflection.[52]

Concerning the external disciplines, Foster includes simplicity, solitude, submission, and service as essential components to the believer's healthy spiritual formation. Regarding simplicity, he develops a theological framework in both the Old and New Testament that "sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others."[53] In the way of practical advice, he

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46. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, xv, xvi.
47. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33-35.
48. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 48-53.
49. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 54-56.
50 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 56-61.
51 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 63.
52. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 64-66*.*
53. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 85.

gives the reader ten principles that all Christians can apply in order to achieve "outward expressions of simplicity."[54]

Foster proceeds by turning our attention toward solitude and reminds us that without "silence there is no solitude" and silence "sometimes involves the absence of speech" but "always involves the act of listening."[55] Always the pragmatist, he gives the reader essential steps into a life of solitude[56] and argues that "solitude and silence teach" us how to love our "brothers for what they are, not for what they say."[57] This solitude will keep us longing for the deep things of the presence of God, who is "wonderful, terrible, gentle, and loving."[58]

What resonated with me concerning the discipline of submission was the contrast between Christian freedom and Christian duty.[59] On one hand the gospel gives liberty to those who have embraced Christ based on Jesus' substitutionary act on the cross. On the other hand, all those who have truly received his grace show evidence thereof by living the rest of their lives as his slave. This new Christian identity brings us voluntarily under the submission of Christ *and* his church. Foster calls this a "revolutionary subordination" and warns those who attempt to abuse it.[60]

Foster concludes the outward disciplines with service. He defines service by contrasting "self-righteous service" with "true service"[61] and by arguing for the necessity of humility.[62] He dismantles some of the most common excuses for serving in his day[63]

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54. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 90-95.
55. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 98.
56. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 105-8.
57. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 108.
58. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 109.
59. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 111.
60. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 120-21.
61. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 128.
62. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 130-31.

and concludes by affirming that Christian service takes place not only in the church but also in the marketplace.[64]

Writing about the need for Christian service in the marketplace makes way for Foster to conclude his literary masterpiece with corporate disciplines, which include confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. He argues that confession is a "difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners."[65] This is exacerbated by the fact that human nature bends toward isolation and secrecy rather than transparency and community. In this section the author outlines the benefits of confession, including God's forgiveness, godly counsel, and a clear conscience.[66]

The second corporate discipline is worship. Worship is the believer's "response to the overtones of love from the heart of the father."[67] Foster argues that true worship of the creator goes beyond "forms and rituals, techniques and methods,"[68] to a place where God "touches and frees our spirit" until it is set ablaze by the "divine fire."[69] Foster describes true worship by reminding us who the "object of our worship is;"[70] by teaching us concerning the priority and preparation of worship;[71] by considering the "avenues into worship;"[72] and by reminding us that the greatest "fruit of worship" is the manifest presence of almighty God.[73]

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63. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 132-33.
64. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 135-40.
65. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 145.
66. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 147-56.
67. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 158.
68. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 158.
69. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 159.
70. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 159.
71. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 160-64.
72. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 166.
73. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 173-74.

The third corporate discipline is guidance, which Foster describes as God leading people through the body of Christ.[74] He argues this in contrast to the individualistic concept of guidance we have grown accustomed to in America. He establishes the efficacy of his argument by reviewing the corporate discipline of the early church[75] and by using the historical models of St. Francis of Assisi and the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C.[76] He ends by exhorting the readers on the limitations and dangers of corporate guidance, reminding us that all human systems are finite and possess flaws.[77] Our trust resides ultimately in the authority of Scripture.

The final discipline is celebration. Foster argues that it is at the center of the life of the church.[78] The benefits include the giving of strength,[79] joy,[80] and the ability to save us from "taking ourselves too seriously."[81] Foster argues that celebration gives us the fortitude to "live in all the other Disciplines," and when it is "faithfully pursued, the other Disciplines bring us deliverance from those things that have made our lives miserable for years which, in turn, evokes increased celebration."[82]

I could not end this second section on the essentials of the spiritual disciplines without interacting with Dallas Willard's classic, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. The social and cultural crisis that our world is experiencing is a clear indication that humanity's misfortunes are spiritual in nature. Willard observes that the church has done far too little to resolve society's ills due to the fact that we also are experiencing the same failed "self-

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74. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 176.
75. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 177-78.
76. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 180-82.
77. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 187-89.
78. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 190-91.
79. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 191.
80. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 192-93.
81. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 196.
82. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 201.

fulfillment techniques" as unbelievers have. Therefore, the spiritual unhealthiness is not just a symptom of the world but of the church as well. How must the church respond? The author points out two underlining pragmatic principles that will heal the church of its internal predicament and equip it to respond to the evils of this present world order. The first thing we must do is take "human transformation seriously," and the second thing we must do is "clarify and exemplify realistic methods for human transformation."[83] The point of this literary work responds to the latter proposition.

After establishing a foundation for the need of spiritual transformation, Willard offers educational and pragmatic principles that equips the church with its mission in the spiritual development of believers. He argues that we "can become like Christ by following him in the overall style of life" we choose.[84] By observing and practicing the things that Jesus practiced, we will eventually and progressively be transformed into the same image and likeness. With this in mind, Willard continues his argument by reintroducing the spiritual disciplines to today's church as a foundational tool toward this end. This is to say that the spiritual disciplines need to be taught, by word and deed, as a crucial tool of human transformation. Willard argues that "the disciplines are part of the good news of new life. We should practice them and then invite others to join us there."[85] Before he lists of some of the spiritual disciplines that have historically been exercised for the spiritual development of believers, Willard establishes some of the practical elements of the disciplines, explains the harmony that must exist between spirituality and our physical bodies, and the nature of life and spirituality.

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83. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), ix.

84. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, xi.

85. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, xi.

Concerning the practical elements of the disciplines, the author motivates his

readers by explaining that although the Bible clearly teaches that discipleship has a price,

sin and the path of the wicked is far more expensive. This is to say that the disciplines are

sacrificial in nature but are well worth the investment. This is because the goal of the

disciplines is to "develop for practical implementation the methods by which women and

men interact with God to fulfill divine intent for human existence."[86] This is why the

sacrifice is worthwhile; for most Christians will agree that the fulfillment of our divine

purpose in the earth is one of the most important priorities in life. According to the

author, the spiritual disciplines will accomplish this.

In regard to the harmony that exists between our spirituality and our physical

bodies, Willard has much to say. For example, he establishes the argument that "the

spiritual and the bodily are by no means opposed in human life—they are

complementary."[87] Therefore, true spirituality is not "wholly inward" or strictly kept

between the individual and God; it is the "holistic quality of human life," a "positive

manifestation externally."[88] This is why "the surrendering of myself to him is inseparable

from the giving up of my body to him;" and to "withhold our bodies from religion is to

exclude religion from our lives" because our life is a "bodily life."[89] Many believers have

been erroneously taught that the human body is evil, but the truth is that the human body

is an instrument that can be used for both good and evil. The body is "vile" only if left to

its carnal sinful state, but spiritual life vitalizes the body.[90] Willard concludes this

argument by explaining that "although the disciplines are spiritual they never fail to

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86. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 15.
87. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 75.
88. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 77-78.
89. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 81-84.
90. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 40-42.

require specific acts of dispositions of our body."[91] This harmony between spirit and body is a key element in the believer's spiritual development.

Regarding the nature of life and spirituality, the author confirms that we must have a firm grasp upon the general nature of life to understand spirituality and the spiritual life. The nature of life is external in scope. Individual things need other external things to continue living. Human life is astonishing in that we learn how to use what is outside of ourselves to extend our lives. Unfortunately, because of the depraved nature of our human condition, brought to us and through us by sin, our efforts to extend life often results in the "terrifying phenomenon of destroying life; or in the least, deforming life."[92] This is one of the reasons why our connection with the creator, who is a Spirit, is the key component to life and spirituality. Ultimately, life is found in the author and giver of life, God. Simply put, he who drinks from this fountain of life lives; he who is not connected to God is corrupted and dies.

The concept of "biblical spirituality is that of an ordered realm of personal power founded in the God who himself is spirit."[93] Consequently, "a spiritual life consists in the range of activities in which people cooperatively interact with God—and with the spiritual order deriving from God's personality and action."[94] A spiritual person is someone who is "correctly integrated into and dominated by God's spiritual kingdom."[95] Thus, the disciplines are "activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order."[96]

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91. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 81-84.
92. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 62.
93. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 64-65.
94. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 67.
95. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 67.
96. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 68.

In the final chapters, Willard presents a sufficient and efficient list of some of the spiritual disciplines that have been practiced by the church for years but warns that trying to create an exhaustive list that works for all believers would be an exercise in futility.[97] Nevertheless, he does outline some formative practices that historically have been beneficial toward achieving healthy spirituality, including the practice of "voluntary exile, the vigil, journaling, Sabbath keeping, physical labor" and even the mundane tasks of everyday life.[98] He also helps bring clarity and precision to the practice of the spiritual disciplines by dividing them into two categories: those which are disciplines of abstinence and those which are disciplines of engagement.[99] I see his focus as complementary to Foster's inward, outward, and corporate presentation of the spiritual disciplines. Believers who have understood that spiritual disciplines are inward and outward in nature can add the fact that some disciplines require Christians to abstain from certain pleasures while also making the effort to engage others. Willard's two categories should be exercised in harmony and could be described as two cords from the same twine. This is to say, that while the Christian is abstaining from those things that hinder his or her spirituality, he or she must also complement those practices by engaging in the disciplines that will empower the believer to live a lifestyle that is in accord with kingdom principles.

In the first two sections, we have reviewed the arguments of experts who have described the true nature of discipleship and the essentials for spiritual formation, two subjects that are relevant in the study of this thesis-project. In this final section, we will

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97. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines,* 157.
98. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 157.
99. Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 158.

discover what the experts have to say about the ecclesial approach to discipleship, which will consolidate the information required in this project.

Discipleship in Community

The first logical step in placing discipleship practices in the context of the Christian community would be to consider how the early church fleshed out the commandment of Christ to "go make disciples." One of the experts who has written on this subject is Michael J. Wilkins in *Following the Master*. In it he dedicates an entire section to discipleship in the early church. He begins this unit by sharing some of the basic differences between individual discipleship practices and communal discipleship practices. He argues that "although individual discipleship is considered a biblical method," it often "overshadows an equally important biblical truth, the idea of community."[100] This idea of community requires "two essential ingredients: relations (of mutual acceptance, forgiveness, and service) and structured organization (with clear boundaries and demarcation of function)."[101] Examples of the concept of community discipleship in the Bible include "patriarchal families, the wandering people of Israel, the kingdom of Israel, the twelve disciples, and the church."[102] The author establishes the fact that Jesus' individual disciples learned how to function in community while walking with him for three years.[103] He calls this the "embryo" of their community experience.[104]

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100. Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 244.
101. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 270.
102. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 244.
103. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 247.
104. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 270.

Wilkins highlights the fact that the Gospel of Luke chronicles the disciple's journey from individual disciples to a "community for discipleship" made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.[105] The Spirit provided for this new community of disciples "fellowship, encouragement, edification, and mutuality necessary for following the Master in the new era" after his ascension.[106] In order to argue the accuracy of this transition in the context of communal discipleship, Wilkins embarks on an etymological and contextual study of the word *disciple* or *disciples* in the book of Acts. After an exhaustive biblical study of these terms, he concludes that "Luke draws a parallel between the expressions 'those who believe' and 'the disciples.'"[107] There are only two examples in the book of Acts where these parallels can be questioned.[108] His study of the word *disciples* in the book of Acts also provided a description of them as the "post-Easter believers intimately associated together as the new community of faith, the church."[109] He points to Acts 6:2 as one such transition, observing that the "'disciples were increasing in number' and this unified band of believers are called the 'the community of the disciples.'"[110]

This transition of designating the disciples as "the church" is the fulfillment of our Lord's declaration in Matthew's Gospel: "And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'" (Matt 16:17-18). Luke embraces this transition

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105. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 247.
106. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 248.
107. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 248-49.
108. Refer to the arguments Wilkins makes on Acts 9:25 and Acts 19:1 (*Following the Master*, 252-56).
109. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 256.
110. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 256.

in his narrative soon after the disciples' Pentecostal experience of the "indwelling Spirit of God," using the word *church* to "designate the community of faith."[111] From that moment forward, he "emphasizes that 'disciples' are those who believe in Jesus as the Christ, those who are now associated together in the new creation, the church."[112] Wilkins also argues that Luke's use of the word *apostle* in the book of Acts confirms this new dynamic of the disciples as "the church." He contends that the apostles are the twelve disciples of our Lord who are now the "leaders of the new community," all of the other followers of Christ.[113]

An essential point in Wilkins's argument of the disciples' transition from individual discipleship to community discipleship was their requirement to be equipped for the task at hand. He makes this point using four fundamental teachings. The first refers to the disciples' need to apply Jesus' teaching in a way that lived out "the meaning of life."[114] This is to say that the messages they received from their Master had to become the "foundation of the discipleship life of the new community."[115] The second lesson was the need to "actualize the unity of community brought by the Spirit."[116] This means that the disciples had to allow the Holy Spirit to play a "major role" in their ministries.[117] The third exhortation that would equip the disciples to transition from individuality to community was their call to be a "witness to the good news of Jesus in the power of the Spirit."[118] The church could not just be a place where rules and regulations were followed; it had to be a community where the power of the Holy Spirit moved through

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111. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 257.
112. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 257.
113. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 258-59.
114. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 261.
115. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 261.
116. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 265.
117. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 265.
118. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 267.

the faithfulness and spirituality of each of its members.[119] The final teaching presented by

Wilkins focused on the second coming of Christ. This is to say that the disciples had to

"let the absence of Jesus be an incentive to hopefulness until his return."[120]

Wilkins concludes his arguments by summarizing and clarifying the terms he

previously mentioned. According to him, the church is a "community of disciples

composed of all those who have believed on Jesus for salvation."[121] He insists that the

church must "regain the perspective of Acts: To believe on Jesus draws a person *into*

community that defines its expectations, responsibilities, and privileges in *terms of*

discipleship"[122] (emphases added). This community of disciples practices the same

principles as the early church did: the apostles' teaching (the dynamic of Scripture),

fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer, and the sharing of their property.[123] Those who

practice these things in harmony with other like-minded people will find themselves

progressively transformed into the image and likeness of our Lord.

Some of the fundamental principles we have considered so far were first penned

by one of the most famous theologians this side of the Reformation, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

In his Christian classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*, he offers the thesis on how the modern

Christian community can and must respond to the New Testament's command to follow

Christ. In it he is concerned about how the church is presenting and assimilating the

gospel of our Lord, which in his view, has been like "spiritual tyranny over men, by

dictating to them what must be believed and performed in order to be saved, and by

presuming to enforce that belief and behavior with sanctions of temporal and eternal

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119. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 267-68.
120. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 269.
121. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 271.
122. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 271.
123. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 274-77.

punishment."[124] He qualifies his argument by reminding his readers that Christ has called

Christians to a life of liberty but clarifying that our liberty must never "ignore the

seriousness of his commands."[125] Therefore, there must be a balance between the

believer's call to discipleship and his or her freedom in Christ. This tension is one of the

motifs that permeate the text.

Although this masterpiece includes a wealth of information on numerous

discipleship principles such as the cost of grace, spiritual disciplines, and practical

discipleship values extracted from the Sermon on the Mount, my work here will

concentrate on Bonhoeffer's discipleship arguments in the way of the church. He

considers how Christians today answer the call to follow Christ and concludes this can

happen only by and through the church, by means of the ministry of the Word and the

sacraments.[126] He begins by establishing the church as an essential means of achieving

discipleship by writing about the doctrine of water baptism. He equates following Christ

through water baptism to the disciples' call to follow Jesus in the Gospels; "where the

Synoptic Gospels speak of Christ calling men and their following of him, St Paul speaks

of *Baptism*."[127] In the discipleship command of our Lord, the church has been given the

ordinance of water baptism in which believers can initiate their grace response to follow

Christ. Bonhoeffer lays out three characteristics of baptism to underscore his argument:

baptism symbolizes a spiritual "breach" by Christ who "invades the realm of Satan" and

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124. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 37.
125. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 37.
126. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 226-28.
127. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 229-30.

adds another soul to his eternal kingdom;[128] baptism symbolizes "justification from sin";

and is a "visible act of obedience."[129]

The second way Bonhoeffer establishes the church's role in discipleship is

through the Lord's Supper. He makes a compelling argument that believers become

disciples of Jesus by becoming part of the Body of Christ, not only through water baptism

but also through the sacraments; "it is certain that there can be no fellowship or

communion with him except through his Body. For only through that Body can we find

acceptance and salvation. The answer is, through the two sacraments of his Body,

baptism and the Lord's Supper."[130] He goes a step further and argues that according to

the teaching of the New Testament, the church is the "real presence of Christ" and in a

"unique sense," we should "think of the church not as an institution but as a *person"* and

not just a "fellowship of members."[131] Thus, since the church is the steward of these two

ordinances, and since these ordinances are the means by which God has provided for men

and women to follow Christ today, discipleship in the community of the church is the

cornerstone of the spiritual formation of Christians.

The final argument Bonhoeffer poses concerning the church and the life of

discipleship is the visibility of the church. This is to say that the church of our Lord is a

"visible community" and this visibility is made possible through the preaching of the

Word.[132] The church has been given the privilege and responsibility to baptize all those

who confess Christ as Lord, to administer the Lord's Supper to all who have been

baptized, and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in season and out of season.

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128. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 231.
129. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 232-33.
130. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 239.
131. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 241, 243.
132. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 248-49.

Bonhoeffer goes on to argue that the church is made visible not only by the "sum of the apostles teaching . . . preaching"[133] and the proclamation gifts of preachers today,[134] but also through what he calls its "living-space."[135] He describes this aspect of the visibility of the church via the Greek word *koinonia*.[136] This is to say that the church is a fellowship and brotherhood of the followers of Christ that exists not only behind closed doors but also in public. This aspect of community discipleship is often minimized among most of the Pentecostal churches in the world. As I mentioned in the last section, joyful, playful, and outside activities have been traditionally frowned upon by the Pentecostal movement, which judges these activities as worldly and carnal. Yet according to Scripture, the primitive church not only enjoyed the spiritual edification that came through the apostles' preaching and teaching but also that which comes through fellowship and eating food together. The combination of the two is what gave them "favor with all the people" and successful church growth (Acts 2:47).

In summary, the church has been given the stewardship of water baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the mission of becoming a visible presence in the earth. These three activities are all community aspects of discipleship and essential in the spiritual formation of Christians today.

Our final specialist is Greg Ogden. In *Transforming Discipleship*, he writes about the principle of community discipleship through the ministerial project he calls "microgroups." These microgroups are a group of three to four believers who meet weekly and commit to regular following of three activities: a "topical study of scripture

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133. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 151.
134. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 253.
135. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 254.
136. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 254.

and its application to daily life, memorization of bible verses, and weekly transparent interaction" with the other members of his or her group.[137] We will discuss various aspects of these groups later.

In a review of the literature on discipleship, Ogden affirms what Dallas Willard, Jonathon Dodson, and other theologians have argued concerning the lack of efficient and effective discipleship practices in the churches of America. He argues that the "current state of discipleship" in most churches is "superficial."[138] Most Christians' spiritual lives can be categorized as "casual verses disciplined,"[139] and in a survey he presented on the state of discipleship, "only 20 percent of all Christian adults were involved in . . . discipleship activities."[140] In his second section, the author outlines a theological framework of discipleship using the examples of Christ and the apostle Paul for his argument. Using the example of our Lord, he encourages the reader on the need to do "the Lord's work the Lord's way" establishing, in the process, some basic principles.[141] Concerning the apostle Paul, the author highlights Paul's ability to "empower" his mentees to "reach the state of maturity in Christ."[142] Ogden shares a four-stage developmental method to facilitate the maturity process for disciples. This includes "imitation," which focuses on the disciple's need for direction; "identification," where the disciple embraces the "protection and unconditional love" of Christ; "exhortation," where the disciple experiences "increased freedom and identity formation," and

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137. Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples One at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 10.
138. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 22.
139. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 26.
140. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 27.
141. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 62-63.
142. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 97.

"maturation," where the disciple reaches spiritual adulthood and is in the process of multiplying himself in others.[143]

The final section of Ogden's presentation gives us more pertinent information toward community discipleship which under his methodology is realized through an ecclesial structure of microgroups. In this section he presents the following essential principles concerning discipleship in a communal setting: (1) the establishment of relationships, (2) the ability of the disciple to reproduce himself in others, and (3) the transformation of the disciple. Concerning the principle of establishment of relationships as an essential component of community discipleship, the author argues that "disciples are made through relational life investments" and not as a result of a "six-week, ten-week or even a thirty-week program."[144] Community discipleship goes beyond programs and classroom settings toward a dynamic and interactive relationship with another believer that can last a lifetime. Ogden contrasts four characteristics between discipleship programs and discipleship relationship. These are (1) "discipling relationships are marked by intimacy, whereas programs tend to be focused on information; (2) discipling relationship involve full, mutual responsibility of the participants, whereas programs have one or few who do on behalf of the many; (3) discipling relationships are customized to the unique growth challenges of the individuals, whereas programs emphasizes synchronization and regimentation; (4) discipling relationships focus accountability on life change, whereas programs focus accountability on content."[145]

The second principle Ogden describes is the ability of the disciple to reproduce himself in others. He attributes the lack of the multiplication of disciples in the church

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143. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 100-10.
144. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 115.
145. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 119-21.

today to the methodology some churches have grown accustomed to implementing: the one-on-one, Paul-and-Timothy model. To reinforce his argument, Ogden proceeds to compare this model with the one he proposes in the book. He does so by contrasting the principles and productivity of both. In the traditional model, the disciple "carries the responsibility of the spiritual welfare of another; sets up a hierarchy that tends to result in dependency; limits the interchange or dialogue; creates a one model approach; and typically, does not reproduce" other disciples.[146] In contrast, the communal aspect of discipleship, which he calls microgroups, produces the following results: "there is a shift from unnatural pressure to natural participation of the discipler; there is a shift from hierarchical to relational; there is a shift from dialog to dynamic interchange; there is a shift from limited input to wisdom in numbers; and there is a shift from addition to multiplication."[147] Ogden summarizes this section by arguing that community discipleship practices are greater than the traditional one-on-one discipleship because it "encourages multiplication" and "minimizes the hierarchical dimensions and maximizes a peer-mentoring model."[148]

The final principle in this concluding section, communicated by Odgen, is the need of transformation. In it he lays out "four environmental conditions" that must be present during community discipleship in order to achieve the multiplication he mentioned.[149] These conditions are communicated in a narrative form: "When we open our hearts in *transparent trust* to each other, around the *truth of God's word*, in the spirit

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146. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 134-35.
147. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 139-40.
148. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 141.
149. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 144.

of *life-changing accountability*, while engaged in our *God-given mission*, we are in the

Holy Spirit's hothouse of transformation."[150]

Concerning transparent trust, Ogden argues that "the extent we are willing to

reveal to others those areas of our life that need God's transforming touch is the extent to

which we are inviting the Holy Spirit to make us new."[151] In order for transparent trust to

function properly, the discipleship environment must be trustworthy, communicative, and

developmental.[152]

The author lists the truth of God's Word after the principle of transparent trust in

order to focus teaching on the relevant, present experiences of the members of the

microgroup.[153] In this way, the use of Scripture is not only accurate but also timely, and

the functions of "teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" can be

fulfilled in the lives of the disciples.[154]

In regards to producing a discipleship environment of life-changing

accountability, the author contends that this crucial principle is covenantal in nature.[155]

He even goes as far as requiring the participants in each microgroup to write out the

covenant in "mutual agreements between" all the members of the group.[156] The

implications are that the "covenantal partners are giving each other authority to hold them

to the covenant they have mutually agreed to."[157]

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150. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 145.
151. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 145.
152. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 146-52.
153. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 153.
154. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 153.
155. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 156.
156. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 156.
157. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 156.

Ogden argues that the final climate condition of being "engaged in our God-designed mission" is the "most critical condition."[158] This is because the other principles are designed for the purpose not only of enjoying biblical truths, the presence of God, and the fellowship of other believers but also to equip disciples to fulfill the Great Commission given to us by our Lord and Savior. When disciples take seriously their participation in the panoramic and eternal plan that God has with humankind, their lives will be truly transformed, and they will experience the provision, passion, and presence of God like never before.[159]

Having reviewed what the experts have published concerning the nature of discipleship, the essentials of discipleship, and the practices of discipleship in the context of the Christian community, I will now move on to chapter 4 and reveal my findings concerning the discipleship practices of the denomination I have recently studied and have been actively involved with.

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158. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 158.
159. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 160.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

  I have embarked on this discipleship journey with the purpose of studying the

formative practices of the denomination that I love, and have been actively a part of, for

more than twenty-five years. I took on this task in an attempt to discover specifically how

we assimilate new converts into our churches in order to be faithful to the command of

our Lord to "go and make disciples." In chapter 1 I presented the setting of the Spanish

Eastern District (SED) of the Assemblies of God and gave an overview of the history and

spiritual climate of the Pentecostal movement. In chapter 2 I established a theological

framework for discipleship in the Old Testament by considering the personal discipleship

relationship between Moses and Joshua and the concept of community discipleship by

reviewing the record concerning the company of the prophets. I also presented

discipleship in the New Testament by doing an overview of Christ's ministry recorded in

the Gospels and cross referencing those principles with the ecclesial practices of the

apostles. In chapter 3 I presented a literary review of theologians in the field of spiritual

formation who are relevant to this project. In this chapter I will explain the process

employed to study the discipleship practices of the Spanish Eastern District of the

Assemblies of God and will uncover the results of the data research that I have carefully

composed.

Survey of the Discipleship Practices of the SED

Survey Objectives

The researcher conducted a survey of 72 churches of the Assemblies of God in

our district[1] by personally handing them the documentation during our annual four-day

Pastors' and Leaders' Summit in October of 2016. The purpose of the survey was to

determine the discipleship practices that specifically target new converts. I should note

here that the researcher did not study the practices of his own church in order to maintain

clarity and integrity in the investigation. It should also be noted that the survey was not

intended to compile any personal data from the persons who voluntarily offered feedback

for the study. Through the use of twelve questions,[2] the author was able to determine how

many churches actively had a discipleship program that responded to the spiritual needs

of new converts, the length of the programs, what components or materials composed

their program, and how satisfied they were with the outcomes of their program. The

results of the survey revealed that although almost all the churches (92%) recognized the

need for a discipleship system that would help facilitate the spiritual formation of new

converts, almost half of them (40%) dedicated a total of only eight hours per disciple

toward that goal. The survey asked the following questions:

1) How long have you served as the pastor of the church?

2) How many years total have you served in pastoral ministries?

3) What is your highest level of academic education?

4) Does your church offer a discipleship program for new converts?

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[1]. District is a cultural way of abbreviating the name of the Spanish Eastern District or any district in our denomination.

[2]. Refer to appendix A for the entire survey.

5) If your church does offer a program, how many sessions or classes does it take to complete the training?

6) If your church does offer a program, indicate the components included therein.

7) How do you evaluate the quality of your discipleship program?

8) What needs to be done in order to improve your discipleship program?

9) If your church doesn't have a discipleship program for new converts, what will it take for you to start one?

10) Are you interested in information on how other Assemblies of God churches train their new converts?

11) Do you presently have plans to change how your church is training new converts in the next year?

12) If your church had unlimited resources, what would you do to train new converts?

The outcome of the survey, along with some observations, are below.

Strengths and Weakness

One of the things that resonated with me was the longevity and experience of the senior pastors who participated in the survey. Fifty-three percent of the pastors have been leading their congregations for more than ten years and have been active in ministry for more than twenty years. Although longevity in the pastorate is usually considered to be beneficial to the local congregation, my concern is that their longevity should have provided sufficient time to realize that eight hours of spiritual development for new

converts is nowhere near enough time to establish a foundation for healthy spirituality. The only thing that encourages me is that more than half the pastors (67%) indicated that they planned to make changes to their system of discipleship within the next year[3] (perhaps we can be instrumental in making that a reality). More specifically, this area of the survey indicates the following results: 31 percent of the pastors are planning on making significant changes in their discipleship program; 36 percent are planning on making small but significant changes to their discipleship program; 24 percent do not have plans of changing their present discipleship program, and 6 percent are not sure if they will make any changes to their program.

I mentioned above that although 92 percent of the pastors recognized the need for a discipleship system that would help facilitate the spiritual formation of new converts, yet 40 percent of them dedicated a total of only eight hours per disciple toward that goal. This is one of the major weaknesses of our present discipleship culture. This is exacerbated by the fact that Pentecostal churches traditionally allow new converts to participate in almost all aspects of our ecclesiology (usually because of the need for volunteers). The churches that have restrictions usually require them to at least go through their discipleship program first. This means that undertrained and underdeveloped members are contributing to the cycle of spiritual underdevelopment.

The remaining outcomes in the category of program length revealed that 29 percent of the churches require at least twenty class lessons in order to complete the program. That is approximately twenty to twenty-five hours of spiritual development and training. Even more encouraging still is that 22 percent of the churches have discipleship

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[3]. I arrived at the figure of 67 percent based on the 31 percent of the pastors who were planning on making *significant* changes in their discipleship program and the 36 percent of pastors who were planning on making *small* changes to their system of discipleship within the next year.

ministry programs that are more extensive with more than twenty-five hours of

discipleship formation for their new converts. Although the last two percentages reveal

that half of our churches train new converts for an average of six months, it also means

that the other half of our churches are training them for only two months. I will respond

to this deficiency further in the final section of this chapter.

Another area in the way of discipleship training for new converts that I felt was

important to study was the elements within the system itself. For example, was the Bible

a necessary component of their program? Was extrabiblical material used in addition to

the Bible in their program? Was interactive dialogue with a teacher or facilitator a part of

their program? The following chart indicates the elements included and the outcomes.

Table 1: Elements included in the discipleship systems of the SED

Churches that do not have a discipleship program for new converts	8%
Churches that assign specific passages of the Bible within the discipleship lesson plan	50%
Churches that include books in addition to the Bible in their lesson plan	51%
Churches with programs that include interactive dialogue with the teacher/facilitator	65%
Churches that include multimedia resources within their discipleship program	11%
Churches that include a dialogue about how to become a member of the church in their discipleship system	71%

The first thing that resonated with me concerning the results of the survey that

focused on the elements included in the discipleship programs was the fact that almost 10

percent of our churches do not have an established discipleship system that responds to

the needs of new converts. This is obviously concerning not only because it shows a

direct violation to the command of Christ, but also because this means that in almost 10 percent of our churches new converts are not given the attention that they need. What is even more problematic is the fact that our district leaders presently do not have a way of measuring, monitoring, and curtailing this crucial deficiency. I have been serving as a member of SED's governing body now for two years, and issues of spiritual formation, or the lack thereof, has never been on the agenda. Some may look at the percentage and argue that it is minimal; nevertheless, the fact that it exists and is not addressed reveals a weakness that I will address in the next section.

The results of the second category were equally alarming. Only half of the churches that presently have a discipleship program require *specific* biblical references as an essential component in the curriculum. This can mean essentially one of two things: (1) that the discipleship programs in half of our churches do not require the Bible as a necessary element in the training of new converts; (2) that the discipleship programs in half of our churches do not develop specific discipleship themes based on biblical passages that reveal those subjects. It would be difficult to argue, based on my observations of the Pentecostal churches in our denomination,[4] that the Bible would be excluded in the discipleship training process. Most of our churches, and the movement in general, have always placed a high value on the Bible. It is more probable that the percentages in this category is a reflection of the lack of an efficient systematic training process that targets the specific needs of our parishioners. I will give suggestions on how to respond to this weakness in the last section of this chapter.

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[4]. For the past two years my observations have been more frequent and systematic due to the fact that I was elected as a presbyter (overseer). The area under my direct supervision is the largest in our district and has fifty-five churches in it.

The results of the next category revealed that 51 percent of our churches use extrabiblical resources, along with the Bible, as an essential part of their discipleship program. The proponents of the use of discipleship materials indicate that they are vital and facilitate a systematic discipleship training process that answers the needs of new converts, ensures biblical accuracy, frees up the pastor's schedule, and increases the participation of others in the church so that more people can be involved in the discipleship process of the church. In our Pentecostal context, the assurance of biblical accuracy is a principle that resonated with me most. This is based not only on my personal theological convictions but also on the results of the study that focused on the educational level of our pastors. The survey showed that 6 percent of our pastors have not graduated from high school. The highest degree for 25 percent of our pastors is high school or its equivalency (GED). Nineteen percent have taken some college courses, while only 25 percent have graduated with a bachelor's degree. Concerning postgraduate work, 10 percent of our pastors have taken some master's level courses while 18 percent have a master's degree. One percent of our pastors have earned a doctorate of ministry either in this country or in the country of their birth. These numbers are alarming and need to be addressed not only because pastors are the main speakers and leaders of the churches, but also because they are the resident theologians who in most cases are directly responsible for the spiritual development of new converts. Indeed, pastors should see themselves as the persons primarily responsible for the spiritual development of everyone in their communities of faith.

The last three questions in this section indicated that 65 percent of the churches have programs that include an interactive dialogue with the teacher and/or facilitator; this

solidifies the need for proper theological training. It also showed that just 11 percent of the churches include a multimedia component in their discipleship program. This number may be indicative of the need to contextualize our programs or the economic limitations of some of our congregations. The final question specified that 71 percent of the discipleship programs in our churches make sure that information on how to become a member is included in their discipleship program. Although achieving membership into the local body is an important goal in the spiritual development of disciples, we must make sure that becoming a member is the beginning of a great adventure of Christian service and not the means to an end.

In the final section of the survey I asked the pastors to evaluate their present discipleship program and to share some of their ideas on how their systems could improve. Those who did not have a program were asked to share how they thought a program could be implemented. This section required written responses in which 71 percent of the churches responded. Concerning the question that focused on specific improvements to their program, 57 percent of the pastors indicated that they needed to add more subjects or discipleship themes to their system. They recognized that their program was not responding sufficiently to the spiritual needs of their new converts. That is more than half of the churches surveyed! More than half of our churches recognize that their discipleship system needs improvement. Eighteen percent of the pastors surveyed pointed to deficiency in programmatic leadership as a specific weakness that needed to be addressed and/or corrected. Eight percent pointed to the lack of classroom space and the lack of sufficient ministry time as areas that needed improvement. Six percent indicated that they needed to improve the way in which they assess the success of their training

program, while 4 percent of the churches pointed to technological resources and consistency in attendance as areas that need to be added or corrected. Overall, 12 percent indicated that they did not need to improve their present system and that it was in fact efficient enough to be implemented in other churches, while 1 percent specified that the methods of training the members in our district should become unified.

When responding to what pastors would do if they had unlimited resources to develop a discipleship system unique and ideal to their ministry, 45 percent communicated that they would acquire discipleship books and materials. This was eye-opening to me because it indicated that half of our pastors desire discipleship resources in order to improve the spiritual development of their members. This number is consistent with the 57 percent who specified that they need to add more subjects or discipleship themes to their present system. This number increases when one adds the fact that 16 percent of the churches that do not have a discipleship program in our district would start a program by purchasing discipleship books and materials. The economic factor is somewhat revealing in this context. The survey indicates that almost half of our churches would acquire more discipleship resources if they had the economic means. This response was the major concern of the pastors who answered this section of the survey, and our fellowship must not, should not, ignore this information if we are to be faithful to the Great Commission. Other petitions that pastors would acquire if given a blank check was technological equipment and resources (11%), full time discipleship staff (1%), and a community outreach component (1%).

One outcome that was concerning revealed that 6 percent of the pastors use only the Bible to train new converts. They argue that extrabiblical resources such as a

discipleship book could compete for the disciples' hearts and reduce the discipleship experience as merely intellectual. Therefore, some pastors in our movement do not include any resource other than the Bible in the beginning of the spiritual development of new converts. My concern is that if just the Bible is used, the program runs the risk of not addressing the basic principles of spiritual formation that all believers need to learn in order to develop and grow. This also puts a heavier burden on the teacher or facilitator. Pastors would have to choose from a limited pool of volunteers, who have been adequately educated, to reduce or minimize exegetical fallacies. This is why some pastors in our movement teach the discipleship class to the new converts themselves. In my discussions with them, they indicated that they do this in order to safeguard biblical accuracy and biblical doctrine or to ensure that the new parishioners understand their heart and vision.

In summary, 4 percent of our pastors believe that their program is poor, 44 percent graded their program as good but not excellent, 29 percent gave a grade of excellent to their present program, and 17 percent indicated that their discipleship system is good enough to be used as a model for other churches. Overall, 88 percent of all the churches (not just the 71 percent of the pastors who responded to the written section of the survey) indicated that they were interested in receiving more information and resources on enhancing the developmental process of new converts. This data is encouraging and will be addressed in the final chapter.

Conclusion

We cannot move forward to the final chapter of this thesis project without responding to the outcomes above; they require two crucial responses. The first response is concerning the level of theological training of our pastors. The survey revealed that 25 percent have a bachelor's degree and only 18 percent have a master's degree. This means that more than half of our pastors (57%) do not have either. Even those who have achieved one or both of the degrees mentioned above do not necessarily have them within the discipline of Christian theology. The educational tract that they studied could be the subject of a future survey. This would bring greater clarity to our data. In either case, the pastors who never have studied Christian theology at a seminary level should have the opportunity to do so. Therefore, I am suggesting that our denomination investigate the possibilities of creating a seminary-level cohort with one of the Christian institutions within the United States. The investigation should include accessing grants and scholarships and a sponsorship fund. This will seek to respond to the economic limitations of our pastors and leaders who would otherwise cease to study at the postgraduate level. The researcher is an example of this present reality. If it had not been for the efforts of leaders who created a Hispanic ministries program at Gordon-Conwell and sought sponsorship opportunities to help facilitate their studies, I would not be here today. Our district could and should acquire these grants and sponsorship opportunities and make them available to executives, presbyters, pastors, and leaders who are interested in enhancing their level of theological training. An example of this effort already exists in another Pentecostal denomination that is much smaller and has fewer economic resources than we do. To ignore their example and/or the present reality of our

district, or to prioritize other denominational ventures, would be detrimental to our organization and rob us from a brighter future.

The second recommendation, based on the data I complied, is the need to provide or create a discipleship system for new converts that can be adapted by all of the churches in our district. In order to respond to the outcomes of the survey, the program should include, but not be limited to, specific components that I will mention here. The first component that our new system should provide is at least one complete year of discipleship training for all new converts. Although some churches had more extensive programs than others, not one of them lasted for an entire year. Because of the specific needs of our congregations, this year-long program should be broken down into various levels in order to incorporate new members and volunteers into our churches before the entire program is completed by the disciple. In other words, a new convert could complete level one, be baptized, become a member of the church, and qualify to be a volunteer in the church and continue his discipleship training. That way many issues of concern are addressed and the spiritual development of new converts are not compromised.

The new system must also be integral in nature, seeking to address as many of the spiritual needs of the disciple as possible. It is important that all the components here are based on biblical principles, and the Bible must be incorporated in every lesson plan. The new discipleship system should also incorporate elements of technology where the disciple can interact with the teacher/facilitator via the traditional human interaction and via modern formats such as the Internet and social media. The challenge here is to ensure

that the technology is user-friendly due to the fact that the majority of our pastors are over the age of fifty and are not necessarily technologically astute.

The final principle that is essential to the new discipleship program is the need to address denominational unity. This means that the doctrinal components should be consistent with Pentecostal theology. Although some Pentecostal doctrines may be a concern to this researcher, attempting to address them here would only cause division or rejection of the program. A wiser process would be to enhance the educational level of the pastors and parishioners first, then create dialogue and Hispanic Pentecostal models that can eventually facilitate change. As the old saying goes, even Rome wasn't built overnight. A systematic element based on the research compels our new system to be adaptable and flexible to the climate and culture of our churches. Pastors who know from the beginning that the new discipleship program is adaptable to their vision and cultural diversity will be more open to examining the new system.

In the final chapter I will review four discipleship systems that can be implemented in our churches. The fourth will be the basic principles and structure of a system that the researcher will create that responds to the specific need of our denomination based on the data compiled in this project.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES: TOWARD EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING FOR NEW

CONVERTS

A year ago I began this project on a subject that I have been studying, preaching, and practicing for more than fifteen years now. The command of our Lord to "go and make disciples of all nations" has resonated with me since my conversion in 1988. I felt a greater sense of this Great Commission when I was appointed to my first pastoral assignment in 1999. That year my wife and I moved to Covington, Kentucky, to plant the first Hispanic church in that city. As I engaged in this pastoral call, I realized two things: the first was that I was not adequately trained or educated to take on such a solemn task; the second was that I did not have enough discipleship resources to faithfully complete my assignment. These realities moved me to study the subject of discipleship much more intentionally and intensely, and caused me to think about how the denomination that I love and serve may be deficient in this area. The outcomes of the data compiled affirmed my suspicions and pinpointed the areas in our present discipleship programs that need to be reformed. In this final chapter I will present three discipleship systems that respond to the weakness revealed by the study and that can be subsequently implemented to strengthen our churches. The third discipleship system will be the basic principles and structure of a system that I will begin to develop after I graduate.

Ogden's *Manual de Discipulado*

Gregory J. Ogden's manual for discipleship is the first resource that I would recommend for our churches. It is a systematic approach to discipleship and contains sequential lesson plans that will result in the disciple obtaining a robust comprehension of the Christian life.[1] In it Ogden argues that his program will provide three key elements that will facilitate the transformation of the disciples: (1) the truth of Scripture; (2) transparent relationships; (3) and mutual supervision.[2] Ogden recommends that discipleship groups in the churches should not go beyond four people in order to insure these three key transformative elements. Each group should have a leader who follows these specific guidelines.[3] (1) The leader should invite the members of his group to willingly enter into a relationship with each other with a clear understanding that the program goes beyond the weekly lesson plans. This principle is insured by having each disciple sign a discipleship covenant prior to entering the group.[4] (2) The leader must do an adequate job guiding the members of the group through each lesson plan, thus assuring that each disciple is understanding the material correctly. (3) The leader must also participate in all the discipleship assignments included in the materials. (4) The leader must model transparency in the presence of his disciples that will inspire them to do the same.

Ogden's program contains four main concentrations for the development and transformation of new converts. The first part focuses on the believer's ability to grow in Christ. In this part Ogden writes about the biblical mandate to "make disciples," what it

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1. Gregory J. Ogden, *Manuel de Discipulado* (Barcelona España: Editorial CLIE, 2006), 20.
2. Ogden, *Manuel de Discipulado*, 22.
3. Ogden, *Manuel de Discipulado*, 23-24.
4. See appendix B for a sample of the discipleship covenant.

means to be a disciple of Christ, and the development of spiritual disciplines in the life of the disciple such as his or her time of personal devotion, Bible studies, prayer, and worship. The second part focuses on understanding the message of Christ. In it Ogden explains theological concepts such as the Trinity, the image of God, original sin, grace, redemption, justification, and adoption. The third part focuses on how the disciple can become like Christ. In it Ogden teaches on being full of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, how to trust in God, love, justice, and how the disciple can and should share his testimony with the world. In the final part of Ogden's discipleship program he provides lesson plans on the concept of the church, the ministerial gifts, the true nature of spiritual warfare, Christian obedience, and the disciple's call to multiply himself in others.

Chan and Beuving's *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*

The second resource I am recommending to our churches is by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*. Each lesson plan comes with a video presentation for the leader and can serve as a topic for group discussion at the beginning of each session; it is a robust systematic methodology that will go a long way in responding to the needs of our churches. (I should mention that although this material offers resources that respond to the deficiencies in the programs presently being implemented by most of the churches in the Spanish Eastern District, it will need to be translated into Spanish in order to be employed by the majority of our churches.) The authors of *Multiply* have created this discipleship resource in order to help the church respond to the Great Commission given to us by our Lord prior to his ascension. They argue that the curriculum should be implemented under the guidance of two essential

principles: (1) the students that receive the materials should be encouraged to share everything that they learn with others; (2) the teachers and the students should do life together in the context of community.[5]

Chan and Beuving's discipleship program contains five major sections for the development of new converts. The first section encourages the believer to live as a disciple maker. In this section they define the nature of a disciple, review the biblical command of Christ to his apostles to go and make disciples, and emphasize the importance of obtaining the essential quality of possessing the heart of a disciple maker. In section 2 they focus on ecclesiology: the significance of the disciple's participation in the life of the church, the role and purpose of the local church, and the concept of the universal church underlining the disciple's participation in the global kingdom of our Lord. The third section focuses on the basic principles of bibliology. In it they teach biblical principles on the efficacy of studying the Scriptures, the absolute necessity of evoking the Holy Spirit for understanding through prayer, and approaching the study of Scripture via a historical-grammatical methodology. In the fourth section, Chan and Beuving consider the following vital theological concepts of the Old Testament: (1) the creation, (2) the fall, (3) God's covenant with Abraham, (4) exodus and redemption, (5) God's covenant with Moses, (6) the concepts of sacrifice and atonement, (7) God's presence on earth, (8) the kingdom of God, and (9) the Israelite exile and the promise of restoration. In the final section the authors explain the following six essential principles from the New Testament: (1) Jesus as the promised Messiah, (2) the Great Commission, (3) the nature and ministry of the Holy Spirit, (4) the record and testimony of the early

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5. Francis Chan, Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 2012), 10.

church, (5) the essence of the gospel message, and (6) basic principles concerning the second return of Jesus Christ.

The Discipleship Academy

In this final discipleship system, I am offering the basic principles and structure of a program that will specifically cater to the needs of our district. In it I will incorporate principles that directly respond to the weaknesses shown by the outcome of the surveys while incorporating the theological arguments of some of the experts in the field.

Establishing the Discipleship Academy Locally

In order to initiate the discipleship system locally, the pastor and/or leaders of the church should begin by organizing the essential elements of the program. The first component that should be established is the follow-up team. This team is responsible for assimilating every new convert who responds to the call of Christ within the ministry of the local church. Through the efforts of the leader of the follow-up team, information compiled from the new converts' cards[6] are distributed to the members of the team, who adopt new converts by establishing a relationship with them. One of the roles of the members of the follow-up team is to inform the adopted new convert of all the programs and services that the local church offers and to ultimately encourage him or her to join the Discipleship Academy of the church. The names and information about the new converts who show interest in joining the Discipleship Academy are given to the leader of the

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6. See appendix C for a sample of the new convert card.

follow-up ministry, who submits a follow-up report[7] to the director of the Discipleship Academy.

The second essential component of the Discipleship Academy is the Discipleship Academy Leadership Team. This team should consist of the academy director, the assistant director, and the secretary/treasurer. The basic role and responsibilities of the academy director are to (1) collect from the ministry leaders of the church (especially the leader of the follow-up ministry) the names and contact information of all the new converts who have shown interest in joining the academy; (2) compile a list from the information collected and personally contact each new convert interested in beginning the academy (the assistant director helps with this task). The list compiled by the director includes information of the upcoming day and time of the start of the next discipleship class. The director also (3) compiles, under the supervision of the local pastor, a mentorship list that includes members of the local church who are equipped to lead a group of new converts until they graduate from the academy;[8] (4) supervises, along with the assistant director, all the discipleship groups in the present cycle of the Discipleship Academy, especially the completion of the disciples projects;[9] (5) submits a monthly Discipleship Academy report to the pastor of the local church;[10] (6) supervises a monthly mentorship meeting with the teachers/mentors of the academy to discuss the progress and obstacles of the disciples in the program; (7) organizes, along with the assistant director, the Academy graduation of every discipleship group.

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7. See appendix D for a sample of the follow-up report.

8. Under this new system the Discipleship Academy lasts for at least one year and not more than fifteen months.

9. Discipleship projects are specific assignments that are a requirement of each level of the Discipleship Academy. I will explain this further when I explain the specific structure of each of the discipleship levels in my newly created system.

10. See appendix E for a sample of the Discipleship Academy's monthly report.

The role and responsibilities of the assistant director are included but not limited to the information given in the director's responsibilities above. The assistant director is to assist the director in any and all tasks that the director deems necessary. The role and responsibilities of the secretary/treasurer are to (1) maintain an ample supply of the discipleship materials by ordering them from the publisher; (2) distribute the discipleship materials to the discipleship group leaders at least one week before the start of their new discipleship class; (3) collect the funds that are generated from the sale of the discipleship materials from the discipleship group mentors; (4) prepare a month secretary/treasury report for the academy director.[11]

The third essential component of the Discipleship Academy is the teachers/mentors. They are chosen by the academy director, with the approval of the local pastor, and adhere to the following qualifications and guidelines: they must (1) fulfill the biblical qualifications of a leader;[12] (2) be a member of the local church; (3) be willing and prepared to lead their group until each member graduates from the academy (twelve to fifteen months); (4) develop a transparent and credible relationship with their disciples; (5) meet with their group for at least one hour per week; (6) promote and produce class interaction with each disciple; (7) ensure that each disciple is comprehending the biblical principles revealed in the discipleship materials; (8) ensure that each disciple completes the discipleship project at each level of training; and (9) attend the monthly mentorship meeting with the Discipleship Academy leadership team.

The Curriculum

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11. See appendix F for a sample of the monthly secretary/treasurer report.
12. See 1 Timothy 3:1-12, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Having established a basic structure of how the Discipleship Academy would function, I will now present the levels of discipleship training and the biblical discipleship principles that are necessary to achieve healthy spiritual development in the members of our local churches.

The school of worshippers

The first level in the Discipleship Academy is the School of Worshippers. The focus of this level of spiritual development of new converts is to affirm and reinforce their relationship with Jesus. In it, the disciple will receive biblical teaching on the following twelve themes: (1) a basic understanding of the Great Commission given by our Lord to all those who follow him; (2) the nature of a disciple of Christ; (3) how to pray; (4) how to read the bible; (5) understanding praise and worship; (6) the need of salvation: why mankind needs a Savior; (7) the mediator of salvation: why Jesus is the only way; (8) the essentials of salvation: understanding faith; (9) the evidence of salvation: what happens when someone is saved; (10) the assurance of salvation: how can I be sure; (11) the purpose of salvation: why Jesus saved you; (12) the ordinance of the saved: understanding water baptism and Holy Communion. During this level of training, or at the end, the disciple must attend the discipleship retreat entitled "The Cost of Discipleship." In the retreat they will receive conferences and testimonies from some of the leaders of the church and graduates from the past. The discipleship retreat is level 1's disciples project and is a prerequisite for advancing to level 2.

The school of evangelism

The second level in the Discipleship Academy is the School of Evangelism. The focus of this level of spiritual development is to teach the disciple the clear message of the gospel and how to share it with others. In level 1 the goal is to draw the disciple to Christ, in level 2 the goal is to equip disciples to bring others to Christ. The following twelve lesson plans will be included: (1) the disciple's call to evangelize; (2) understanding the message of the gospel; (3) learning how to share your testimony; (4) empowered to be a witness; (5) the fruit of the Spirit; (6) gospel roots: the process of bearing fruit; (7) avoiding unfertile ground; (8) planting on fertile ground; (9) passion for people: the heart of evangelism; (10) fishers of men: methods of evangelism; (11) praying for the lost: standing in the gap for others; and (12) financing the gospel. The disciple's project during this level of training is personal evangelism, in which his or her mentor teaches the disciple how to witness to others. This can be done in class simulations or out on the field (the latter should be the preferred method). The disciple must complete this practical component of his or her training before moving on to the next level in the academy.

The school of mentorship

The third level in the Discipleship Academy is the School of Mentorship. The focus of this level of the disciples' spiritual development in to equip them on how to care for the people they win for Christ. In it they will receive the following lesson plans: (1) the Great Commandment: loving God, loving people; (2) lesson from the Good Samaritan; (3) the church as a family; (4) developing relationships in the church; (5) how to become a mentor; (6) principles for spiritual parenting; (7) caring for new converts; (8)

the stages of spiritual development; (9) dimensions of formation: integral spiritual growth; (10) restoring lost sheep: the ministry of reconciliation. The discipleship project for level 3 focuses on the need of a tender, caring heart. To facilitate this, the teacher/mentor will take his disciples to do hospital visits and visit local senior citizen centers and/or shut-ins. Once the disciple completes this level of training and the project, he or she can advance to level 4.

The school of ministry

The fourth level in the Discipleship Academy is the School of Ministry. The focus during this level of spiritual development is to help the disciples discover and develop the gifts given to them by our Lord and how they should be used in the context of their community of faith. In it they will learn the following biblical principles: (1) Christians called to serve others; (2) understanding the nature of the church; (3) understanding how the church is edified; (4) understanding the mission of the church; (5) the church and the kingdom of God; (6) the gifts of the Spirit; (7) ministerial gifts; (8) servant leadership; (9) how to discover your gifts; (10) how to develop your gifts. During this level of spiritual formation the disciple will complete two essential projects. The first discipleship project happens during the entire level of training. In it the disciple will volunteer for two or more ministries (of his or her choosing) within the local church. The disciple must also go to the graduation retreat at the end of this level of discipleship training. In the retreat the students wash each other's feet while the leaders of the church and the academy pray and intercede over them. At the retreat the students indicate which ministries of the local church they would like to serve in the future. They also have the opportunity to sign up

for a special level 5 discipleship training curriculum that requires them to participate in one of two postgraduate ministries. The first is what I will call "three plus one." This is a small discipleship group of three or four persons, of the same sex, that will continue to meet on a weekly basis with the purpose of continuing the process of their spiritual development together. The members of the small group can choose the people who will be in their group since the level of transparency and accountability will increase and they must feel a sense of trust in order for the group to be effective in the transformation process. The second option that the students can choose is an evangelism cell. These small groups are compiled by a leader and an assistant leader who have graduated from the academy and meets weekly in their home (or another member's home) and invites unchurched friends and family to hear the message of the gospel there. Once the disciples complete all four levels of training, they are authorized to participate in the next Discipleship Academy graduation in their local church!

The school of leaders

As I mentioned above, this level of spiritual formation is offered only to the students who have graduated from the Discipleship Academy and are participating in an evangelism small group or the three plus one small group. This level of spiritual development includes the following biblical principles of leadership taken from the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1) the example Christ gave; (2) servant leadership; (3) understanding spiritual authority; (4) the spiritual life of the leader; (5) the integrity and character of the leader; (6) essential qualities of teamwork; (7) leading with purpose; (8) spiritual dynamics in leadership; (9) faithful stewardship; (10) resisting temptation.

During this level of training the teacher/mentor will ensure that each one of his or her students develops the ability to preach the gospel with clarity and accuracy. This can be achieved with regular visits to the small group and by affording preaching opportunities in the local church. In each case, the mentor/teacher will schedule a meeting with the student in order to review the strengths and weaknesses of their presentation.

A final but essential component of the Discipleship Academy is technical in nature. Due to the rising interest in and use of the Internet and social media, it would be an oversight not to include this in our academy. One aspect of this component could be podcasts. Each lesson plan could be recorded and inserted into a website that the discipleship students could assess in order to review the materials and information given. Interactive videos, testimonials, and assignments could also be incorporated on the website. Students could also download a discipleship app on their phone that would include Scripture from the upcoming lesson plans as well as access to the discipleship website. I have already purchased the rights to build a website that would serve this purpose. The address is academiadediscipulado.com, .org, and .net.

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT DISCIPLING NEW CONVERTS

Cuestionario de discipulado para nuevos creyentes

Este cuestionario ha sido creado para colectar información con el fin de evaluar cómo el ministerio con que está asociado está discipulado nuevos creyentes. Usted tiene la <u>opción</u> de añadir su nombre y ministerio al final de esta encuesta. Toda la información colectada será presentada en forma resumida junto con todos los que han tomado el cuestionario y los datos no tendrán relación con alguien en particular.

Este cuestionario tomará de 5 a 7 minutos para completar.

Los que llenen el cuestionario están consintiendo en ser voluntarios en este estudio.

Este estudio es parte de los requisitos para cumplir la tesis Doctoral del ministerio en Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary en Hamilton, Massachusetts. Si tiene alguna pregunta, me puede llamar al: 973-472-3498.

1. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha servido como Pastor o líder en <u>esta</u> iglesia?
   - o 0-2
   - o 3-5
   - o 6-10
   - o Más de 10 años

2. ¿Por cuántos años ha servido en cualquier ministerio de la iglesia?
   - o 1-5
   - o 6-10
   - o 11-15
   - o 16-20
   - o Más de 20 años

3. ¿Cuál es su nivel más alto de educación?
   - o Menos de la escuela superior
   - o Graduado de la escuela superior o el equivalente
   - o Tomé algunos cursos en la universidad
   - o Graduado de la universidad
   - o Cursos al nivel de maestría
   - o Graduado en una maestría

Las preguntas que siguen están enfocadas en las prácticas del **<u>presente</u>** para nuevos convertidos.

4. ¿Ofrece su iglesia algún sistema de discipulado para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes?
   o Si
   o No
   o No sé

5. Si su respuesta fue si, ¿cuántas sesiones o clases se necesita para cumplir el programa?
   o No es un requisito atender a las clases
   o 1-8 sesiones/clase
   o 9-20 sesiones/clase
   o Más de 20 sesiones/clase

6. Si su iglesia tiene un sistema de discipulado para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes, indique lo que está incluido en el programa
   <u>escoja todas las que aplican</u>:
   o No tenemos un programa de discipulado para nuevos creyentes
   o Asigne la lectura de ciertos pasajes en la biblia
   o Asigne la lectura de otros libros también (no solo la biblia)
   o Diálogo con un maestro y otros alumnos en una clase
   o Se muestra un video o presentación en multe-media
   o Diálogo sobre cómo ser miembro de la iglesia

7. ¿Cómo evaluaría la **<u>calidad</u>** del programa de discipulado en su iglesia?
   o No tenemos un programa de discipulado para nuevos creyentes
   o Pobre
   o Bueno
   o Excelente
   o Ejemplar, puede ser utilizado en otras iglesias

8. Si su iglesia tiene un sistema de discipulado para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes, indique lo que deben hacer para mejorarlo.

9. Si su iglesia NO tiene un sistema de discipulado para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes, indique lo que deben hacer para comenzar un programa de discipulado.

1

10. ¿Tiene planes para cambiar lo que la iglesia está haciendo para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes para el próximo año?

Solo escoja **una** respuesta:
- o Si tenemos planes para hacer cambios significativos
- o Si tenemos planes para hacer algunos ajustes pequeños a nuestro programa
- o No tenemos planes para hacer cambios
- o No estoy seguro si voy a hacer cambios

11. Si su iglesia no tuviese recursos limitados, ¿Cuál sería el programa ideal para entrenar a los nuevos creyentes?

12. ¿Tiene interés de aprender lo que otras iglesias de las Asambleas de Dios están haciendo para discipular a los nuevos creyentes?
- o Si
- o No
- o No sé

Opcional

Nombre: _____

Nombre de su iglesia: _____

_____

Gracias por tomar el tiempo de cumplir este estudio

APPENDIX B

DISCIPLESHIP PACT

El Pacto del Discípulo

Para caminar hacia la madurez en Cristo, y para completar el *Manual del discipulado,* me comprometo a:

1. Completar todas las tareas antes del encuentro semanal para poder participar de forma activa en el encuentro (ver el apartado "Formato de los estudios").

2. Quedar de forma semanal con el grupo durante una hora y media para hablar del contenido de las tareas.

3. Ofrecerme al Señor por entero, sabiendo que voy a iniciar un proceso de transformación acelerada.

4. Contribuir para que se dé un ambiente de sinceridad, confianza y vulnerabilidad en un espíritu de edificación mutua.

5. Considerar seriamente la posibilidad de continuar esta cadena de discipulado, comprometiéndome a invertir tiempo y esfuerzo en, al menos, otras dos personas cuando ya hayamos completado el material del *Manual del discipulado.*

Firmado _____

Fecha _____

(Los compromisos que aparecen arriba no son más que unas pautas mínimas para que los encuentros, es decir, el discipulado, sean eficaces, y se revisaran después de las lecciones ocho y dieciséis. Sentíos con la libertad de añadir otros elementos si creéis que son necesarios).

APPENDIX C

NEW CONVERT CARD

CATEDRAL NUEVOS COMIENZOS   Nuevo Convertido(a) al Señor Jesucristo

(NEW CONVERT TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST)

Fecha (Date) _____ /_____/ **_20_**

Nombre/Name: _____ Edad (Age) _____

Dirección/Address: _____ Apt. _____

Ciudad (City) _____ C.P. (Zip Code) _____

..………...…………. Hijos (as)   (Children) …………..……………

Nombre (Name) _____ Edad (Age) _____

Nombre (Name) _____ Edad (Age) _____

Nombre (Name) _____ Edad (Age) _____

Invitado por (Invited by) _____

Escriba su Petición al reverse (Write you Petition on the back) ...

de Teléfono/Telephone: _____

de Celular (Cell phone) : _____

Correo Electrónico/Email: _____

Caballero/**M**ale _____ Dama/**F**emale _____

Niño/Child **F**_____ **M** _____ Joven/Youth **F**_____ **M** _____

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APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Date: _____

NAME	Phone #	E-mail	Discipleship availability	Comments

DISCIPLESHIP ACADEMY MONTHLY REPORT

Date: _____

Teacher	D - Level	# of registered students	# of absentee students	Books given	Book money collected	Book money outstanding

APPENDIX F

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORT

Date: _____

D - Level	Students	Books given	Book money collected	Book money outstanding

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